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LECTURES

ON

THE GOSPEL,

AS GATHERED FROM THE LIFE OF CHRIST;

INTENDED FOR

POPULAR AND FAMILY INSTRUCTION.

With an Appendix

ON BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

BY THE

REV. HENRY HUGHES, M.A.

OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AUTHOR OF "SERMONS INTENDED FOR POPULAR INSTRUCTION."

LONDON:

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TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND

HERBERT

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,

WHOSE PROFOUND LEARNING

AND

ACUTE CRITICISM,

EMPLOYED IN THE CAUSE OF SOUND RELIGION AND VIRTUE,

HAVE BEEN

SO OFTEN SUCCESSFUL

IN EXPOSING ERROR AND ESTABLISHING TRUTH,

The following Lectures

ARE,

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S KIND PERMISSION,

MOST RESPECTFULLY AND MOST GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

THIS book is not written for Socinians or for any other class of those who call themselves, by way of distinction, Unitarians, for the argument pre-supposes the *divinity of Christ*, *his distinct personality*, and the *union in his person of the two natures, divine and human*, along with *the necessity of an atoning sacrifice*. Still, however, if such men should condescend to take it in hand, the reasonableness of the scheme proposed might act reversely on their primary errors, and they might perchance be made to perceive that that which the argument, if it be any thing, will not allow them to deny, necessarily implies that which they have hitherto been contented to disbelieve.

Those who receive the Gospel as it is, and as the meaning of the word imports, a

message of *glad tidings* from God to man, will I trust find here a clear and convincing exposition of the privileges it affords, and of how we are able to make use of them.

The author does not pretend to have discovered any new doctrine, for he does not consider Revelation to be like some sciences, in which new combinations of materials and new processes may every day lead to new results; but he believes that the whole field of Scripture has, by the grace of God, been long open to the survey of those who have made it their business to explore it thoroughly — that its facts have been long since combined in every way from which a logical inference can be deduced, and that its parts have been analyzed to the last degree of nicety, so that any thing like a *discovery* in religion, is now next to impossible.

The author's aim has been to build up a popular system of belief on certain suppositions, of the correctness of which he believes there can be no doubt in the minds of at least the majority of Christians, at the

same time submitting the materials of his superstructure to the test of the inspired Word.

It is almost needless to say that it has been his wish to steer clear of all controversy, in the Lectures themselves; and that where controverted matters are touched upon they are not treated in that light, but the doctrine stated just as it rises naturally from the premises laid down.

The work was originally composed for a course of lectures to be delivered in the author's parish church, and it is now offered to the public in the same form, in the hope that it may thus be made useful for the purpose of family reading and instruction.

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INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

LUKE I. 17.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

IT must be a matter of serious regret to every one who has the interests of religion really at heart, that the Church of Christ, by which I mean that part of mankind who acknowledge and receive the Scriptures as the standard of their belief, should be rent and torn as they are, by conflicting opinions on the subject of their common faith. An indifferent observer would scarcely suppose it possible that Christians had, one and all, built their religion on the same foundation, that all had received the same revelation from God; that, in the great majority of in-

stances, the same Word had been handed down from their fathers to each and all, in the same pure and unadulterated form, with nought added thereto, and nought subtracted from it.

In this case, as in all others where error is involved, the evil must be referred, not to God, but to the corruption and infirmities of man. The word of God sanctions no variety of doctrine; it preaches but one Gospel—it speaks of *unity*, not of *division*; of "*one* body and *one* spirit, even as ye are called in *one* hope of your calling;" of "*one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* The very essence of the word of God is unity, as God who created us is one, as the Lord Jesus who died for us is one, as there is no baptism but "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," so, according to its teaching, the body of Christ's Church is one, one in Faith, as one in hope.

But is it so in these days? or rather, are not the members of this body torn and rent asunder by violent dissensions; so that,

* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

on earth at least, its unity is utterly destroyed? Are not the passions and prejudices of men, who see not with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts, daily perverting the Scriptures—and indeed searching them for proofs of their own preconceived notions, rather than coming to them with the humble spirit of enquiry, which desires to learn all, and teach nothing? We treat the gospel of Christ with greater contempt than the Heathen soldiers of old the garment which had clothed his dishonoured body; they said, "Let us not rend it," and that garment of the Holy Gospel, which is given us equally without seam, which is thrown over us by Christ, that it may wrap us all alike in its sacred folds, why is it rent into almost as many pieces as there are teachers, so that each one takes away his scanty covering, instead of availing himself of the ample protection of the whole?

This is not as it should be; it is no subject of congratulation that the subtilty and ingenuity of men have been exercised on the sacred field of Revelation, till each man is able to give a reason for a different faith, till every varied creed is made to rest on

the evidence of Deity, and every mode of practice is defended by the same unanswerable argument. This is no subject of congratulation; for, however well and ingeniously systems of doctrine may be defended, whatever satisfaction their tenets may afford to those who believe that they themselves are in possession of the truth, their very variety is contrary to the spirit of the word of God. We are sometimes almost tempted to wish that a confession of faith could be so worded, so clearly and undoubtedly grounded on Scripture, embracing all that it contains, and adding nothing thereto of man's device, that all should find in it a bond of union; but past and present experience has proved this to be impossible, and it would therefore be useless attempting to effect its accomplishment; it would be too near an approach to that harmony and perfection which we are not to look for till false and deceitful teachers are gone to their own place, and human vision is no longer dim. Still, however, there can be but one gospel—there is only one foundation on which we can build, but one faith which can lead us to God; what then is the gospel, where is that foundation,

whence is that faith to be derived? Will you send us to the Bible to look for it, you may ask, when you have already told us that men uphold a great many different doctrines on the authority of the Bible? Yes, my brethren, I would send you to it, for it is our only guide, but not in the spirit in which it is too generally approached; I would send you to the whole Bible, and not to passages or texts selected to answer a human purpose; I would send you as knowing nothing, and desirous of learning all things from God; as of yourselves ignorant and foolish, but fervently beseeching the Holy Spirit to guide you unto the knowledge of the truth. In this spirit, then, let us come to the enquiry of what the Gospel is, in this spirit let us seek a foundation on which to build the hopes of eternity, in this spirit let us unite ourselves to a holy teacher, in whose mouth is no lie, on whose lips is no deceit.

In this enquiry I might begin by bringing forward such doctrines as are considered necessary to salvation by the majority of Christians, or such as are maintained by any sect of Christians, or by my own com-

munion in particular, and accept or reject them as they agreed with or opposed the general tenor of Scripture, and acknowledged redemption through Jesus Christ. This, however, is not the plan that I shall pursue, too much of human prejudice would be mixed up with such an investigation to allow us to approach the truth by a perfectly straight-forward path. I would, with God's grace, come to this enquiry with a mind free and unbiassed, unshackled by previously conceived opinion, and taking the Scriptures as it were a book but just unsealed to mortal eyes, extract from them that conclusion to which their obvious meaning would direct us. But to say nothing of human infirmity and blindness, the difficulty of such an undertaking may well be objected; and indeed I might, if assisted only by my own judgment, select arguments and corroborate them by texts, which would prove, or rather apparently prove, almost every kind of doctrine that has been broached, and thus the question of what the Gospel is would be left as undecided as before. But we must not suppose that because some parts require attentive study, and a careful

and accurate comparison, where little less than inspiration is required to avoid the possibility of error, that God has left us without a plain and obvious guide to lead us unto "all truth," and teach us in language, not to be mistaken but by those whose hearts are wilfully perverted, what the Gospel really is. No, God has not so cared for his people; He has, in the great founder of the Gospel, left us a clear and practical exemplification of the Gospel itself, and thus enables us, by turning our eyes to an example of practice which cannot be mistaken, to embrace those doctrines aright which are either perverted by human ingenuity or inadequately comprehended by human ignorance. What I mean is, that in Jesus Christ, setting aside his higher character of God our Redeemer and Judge, we behold a perfect pattern of a man entitled to and receiving all the benefits of Redemption; we may point to him, and say, "There is one who knows, without the possibility of error, what the whole Gospel is, who acts according to his knowledge, and avails himself of every Christian privilege without exception." Now it cannot

be doubted that if we can make ourselves masters of such a character as this, follow him from the commencement to the close of his christian life, examine his actions, accurately investigate their motives, and trace them to their effects, we shall make ourselves masters of a Gospel which can lead to no error in practice, and unites within itself all the peculiar privileges which can consistently belong to a divine dispensation. I believe that Christ was, in his human character, considered as separate and distinct from his divine nature, so perfect and complete a Christian, if we may so say, that no doctrine can be admitted as necessary to salvation hereafter, or our happiness here (and that is the meaning of Gospel doctrine) which has not its practical illustration in his life; and therefore that the acquaintance with it, which the inspired writers will, with God's blessing, enable us to obtain, will put us in possession of the knowledge, at least, of that pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, of which we are now in search.

In the course of the following Lectures, I shall exhibit to you Jesus Christ under

all those circumstances and in all those situations in which Adam's race are made sensible of the privileges and blessings of the Gospel. I shall exhibit him to you fulfilled with the *Baptismal Spirit*, I shall pourtray him as the *Son of God*, I shall paint him as *he walked with men*, I shall represent him in *temptation* contending with the enemy of souls, I shall lead you to him in *affliction;* we will go together to the *garden of prayer*, we will stand at the foot of the cross, while *death* asserts his temporary right over his mortal body, we will behold him *coming forth from his rocky sepulchre*, and we will follow him to *the right hand of God*, where he hath sat down for ever and ever. In this way we shall endeavour to ascertain the doctrines of the Gospel, and the end or effect which each is intended to produce on ourselves, under the several heads of *The Influences of the Spirit, Adoption by God, Practical Holiness, Victory over Temptation, The uses of Affliction, Communication with God, The Death of the Body, Resurrection from the Dead, and Entrance into Glory.* Taking the foundation which Christ himself has laid, we shall endeavour to build upon

it such a work as may "abide" and "receive reward."* Of one thing we are sure, that in the foundation we cannot be mistaken, that it is not one laid by human ingenuity and wisdom—"for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."†

Though, in discussing the above-mentioned heads, I shall endeavour to treat them so as, not merely to convey knowledge but so as, to make such an impression on the heart of every sinner as will cause him to think his everlasting interests worth caring for, and lead him constantly to that holy teacher, and unerring guide, who is now brought before you; yet, my brethren, I could wish that before we approach the great and mighty Master—to hear his word of love, and behold him walking in sinless purity, approving himself in all things before God his Father,—that we might, each and all of us, be enabled to lay before him the acceptable sacrifice of a penitent and contrite heart, that we might be "made ready a people prepared for the Lord." I could wish that we might be baptized unto *Re-*

* 1 Cor. iii. 14. † 1 Cor. iii 11.

pentance, ere we ask for that Baptism of the Holy Ghost, which is also of fire unquenchable to consume utterly the obstinately impenitent. You will find it maintained throughout the succeeding Lectures, that all our strength is from God, and that it is attainable only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ; but, nevertheless, we must not go so far as to make ourselves mere machines, as if nothing were required on our part, as if placing ourselves among the multitudes that follow a prophet's steps would entitle us to a prophet's reward. No, ere we come to Christ we must know why we need be partakers of his baptism, what need there is that we should be made with him co-heirs of the everlasting God, what obligation we are under to walk with men meekly as he did, why the imaginations of our hearts should be cast down and trampled upon, why with Jesus we must kiss the chastening rod, what it is that with him we need ask of God in Prayer, what are the terrors of that death which is the consequence of sin, what the glorious fruits of a triumph over the grave, and what the bliss of dwelling eternally with our Hea-

venly Father. We must, as I before suggested, prepare ourselves for the Lord, we must make ourselves ready to receive the Gospel.

But under whose guidance are we now to place ourselves? We want a teacher to lead us to our holy Master, we stand in need of an inferior minister to instruct us how we may present ourselves before the great High Priest of our Salvation. This, too, God hath prepared for us; He hath sent his messenger to go before the face of his Anointed Priest, to "go before him in the spirit and power of Elias" the mighty prophet of by-gone days, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." John, pre-eminently styled the Baptist, came according both to the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the historical evidence of the New, to prepare the world for the reception of Jesus Christ. It seems that some preparation was necessary; that at the time that Jesus came into the world the hearts of men were not in a meet state to receive the Gospel he

was about to preach without first undergoing some change. The nation to which John belonged were anxiously looking for the promised Messiah, so that when they heard that one assuming the title of a "Messenger before his face, to prepare his way, to make his paths straight," was come to herald his approach and make the world meet for his reception, they flocked to him to learn what was expected of them, how they might welcome their expected Prince and Saviour in a manner most agreeable to his wishes. And what was the instruction they gathered from him? what were they to do? For this it is that concerns ourselves. They were to do that, which I would to God that we might do every one of us for ourselves; they were to *repent*, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, ere they could entitle themselves to the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom. John's baptism was "the baptism of *repentance* for the remission of sins," they that were accepted as servants of the coming Prince, "were baptised, confessing their sins." This, then, is what is expected of us, thus much we can do for ourselves: the gospel will be no word of power in our

hearts if they are still contaminated by sins unconfessed and unrepented; it will do nothing for their improvement where the paths of unrighteousness are still wilfully preferred. [Your presence this day, in God's sacred house of prayer shews, my brethren, that, like the Jews of old who went out into the wilderness to John, you are willing to learn something of the kingdom of your Prince and Saviour.*] But oh beware, lest you come in the spirit of those Pharisees and Sadduces whom he was compelled to denounce as a "generation of vipers," and to upbraid as coming with the front of hypocrisy to seek a refuge from the wrath to come. They thought that because they were of the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise had been given by God, they should necessarily be looked upon with favour by the Messiah, though they "omitted the weighter matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith;"† and you perhaps may,

* In family reading this passage might be thus altered, 'I trust that those here assembled, for the purpose of worshipping God, are, like the Jews of old who went out into the wilderness to John, willing to learn something of the kingdom of their Prince and Saviour.'

† Matt. xxiii. 23.

in the same spirit, imagine that because you are outwardly members of the church of Christ, you may receive spiritual benefit from the preaching of the gospel without even confessing yourselves sinners, much less exhibiting any proofs of real and genuine repentance. But I repeat that, without such preparation, you cannot even accept the Gospel; you may listen and think you understand it, but you cannot feel it in your hearts. Those Pharisees and Sadducees who thought they should be so great in the expected kingdom, how did they treat their king when he really appeared among them? They despised his salvation, disobeyed his precepts, and crucified himself, and this because they were not by confession and repentance "made ready a people prepared for the Lord." So it is in these days; the reason why the doctrines of the gospel are often so imperfectly apprehended, that they are so grievously shorn of their splendour, and so sadly curtailed of every thing which makes them so essential to a fallen, and still falling race, is, that the hearts of men are not prepared for their reception. God in his mercy will

do much, nay, he will do every thing for those who feel the want of his aid, and therefore earnestly seek him, but he will not interpose the finger of power to rescue from destruction men who are altogether careless, or who see no need of his fatherly interposition. Let us, then, ere we enter upon the solemn inquiry before us, make ourselves ready as the Lord would have us.

You will observe that the baptism which John preached was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."* It seems that they are intimately connected, so intimately that they cannot be divided, repentance being the necessary preparation for the Gospel, remission of sins its peculiar privilege. Repentance, comprehending a heartfelt sorrow for sin, and a deep sense of its awful consequences to ourselves, naturally leads men to desire its remission, then it is that they feel themselves warned to flee from the wrath to come, then it is that they come to the great Teacher with a teachable spirit, and are willing to receive into their hearts the words of truth and life. The man that

* Luke iii. 3.

comes to the preaching of the Gospel in any other spirit than that of an unworthy sinner, conscious of his transgressions, and bewailing them before God his Father, and therefore earnestly seeking a Saviour, must not expect to bear away with him the unadulterated doctrine of the Gospel. If he comes to establish opinions that may distinguish him in the eyes of men, if he comes in the hope that he shall have preconceived notions of his own confirmed by what he hears, if he comes to gratify curiosity, if he comes that he may be thought a righteous person, or even if he is led thither by the expectation that there is something meritorious in being seen among the followers of the Lord, he must not expect to comprehend the true nature and spirit of the word he listens to, he cannot know what the Gospel really is. The most earnest attention, the most assiduous study, will avail nothing without the preparation required by the Lord.

This then, my brethren, is that to which I would lead you; that baptism of repentance to which Christ, though himself without sin, for our example came: and

would that I could speak with the voice of him who came in the spirit and power of Elias, crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." I would lead you to a full and free confession of your sins, I would lead you to an earnest desire to fly unto him for succour who hath visited his people, I would shew you all your wants and all your weakness, I would rouse you from your deep slumber, and shew you that your habitation is among the lifeless dead; and then, and not till then, I would say, "come unto Christ, thou that art weary and heavy laden, and he shall give thee rest;" then, and not till then, I would say, "rise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

Come then with repentance; come with an earnest desire to escape from the bondage of sin; come with an humble confession of unworthiness, with a deep sense of all your weakness, and all your wants, and then as a people prepared for the Lord, let us seek the instruction his life and death is able to convey. Thus let us walk the banks of Jordan, and behold the Holy

Ghost descending from above; thus let us wait upon the Eternal Son of our Eternal Father; thus let us follow him to the habitations of men; thus let us witness his conflict with the powers of darkness; thus let us visit him when bowed down by sorrow and affliction; thus let us be with him in the hour of prayer and supplication; thus let us stand beside his cross of agony; thus let us enter his forsaken sepulchre, and thus let us raise our thoughts to behold him where he sits for ever and ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high. In this spirit and with this *celestial guide* we may haply arrive at the knowledge of a Gospel which is not the word of men, "but the word of God which effectually worketh also in them that believe;"* and may God grant to us, my brethren, thus to become indeed wise unto salvation.

* 1 Thess. ii. 7.

LECTURE II.

INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT. CHRIST RECEIVES THE HOLY GHOST.

ROMANS VIII. 9.

But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

IN our endeavour to ascertain the real nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, however scriptural may be the grounds we have chosen on which to build our inquiries, we shall, I fear, have to encounter many difficulties at the very outset. Thus, in presenting to you the founder of Christianity as an example of one availing himself of every Christian privilege, it may be objected that the Gospel could be no Gospel to him, that to him who was of his own

nature "God from everlasting" there could be no *glad tidings of salvation*, that on him no privileges could be conferred. This objection can nowhere be more plausibly brought forward, than against the doctrine which we shall attempt to maintain on the present lecture, namely, that *as Christ received the Holy Ghost, so his faithful disciples will also be under the influences of the same spirit.* If we endeavour to prove that we need the Spirit of God, and that to Christians God will grant it, *because* he granted it to Christ, we may be told that, however well we may be able to establish the point by other arguments, and by distinct Scriptural authority, yet this argument cannot avail us, for that Christ being himself God, had the Spirit of God necessarily within himself, and of his own proper nature, and therefore, it could not in any sense be said to be *given* him. Now we maintain, and upon the admission of it all the force of our succeeding reasoning depends, that the human nature of Christ, notwithstanding its intimate union with the divine in the same person, was in all things, sin only excepted, like unto our own, "for verily he took not on him the

nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham, wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren;"* that it was sensible of the same infirmities, the same dependence on a higher power, and needed and sought for the same help and assistance, which we are so well aware our own humanity requires. Else, whence the great agony of supplication, that the cup might pass from him, ending with, "yet not my will, but thine be done"?† Whence the desponding ejaculation, "my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death"?‡ Whence the last expiring recognition of God, his hope and trust, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit"?‖ True it is, that he was "without sin,"¶ and, as being so, needed no Redeemer; but then God "made him to be sin for us;"§ and his mortal nature, weighed down by its burden, stood in need of the propitiation which, in virtue of his Godhead, he was himself able to offer. True it is, that the Divinity within was *able* to support, without external aid, the

* Heb. ii. 16, 17. † Luke xxii. 42. ‡ Matt. xxvi. 38.
‖ Luke xxiii. 46. ¶ Heb. iv. 15. § 2 Cor. v. 21.

inferior compound of soul and body, with which it was so intimately united; but, if notwithstanding this, he still had recourse to that other person of the one indivisible Deity, to whom he stood in the mysterious relation of Son, what does it prove, but that he was not only willing to take upon him our nature, and in it to avail himself of Gospel privileges, but was also willing to receive them in the same way that we are taught to do, and to leave us an example of the means by which they are to be obtained?*

Having premised thus much, we shall now turn to the immediate object of our present lecture, which is to draw, from the history of Jesus Christ, the doctrine that

* It appears to me, that the counsel of Jesus Christ, to support his human nature, not by his own immediate Divinity, but by the same external aid which he taught his disciples to look for, after his own departure, is completely exemplified in John xvii. 19, in the original *ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἐγὼ ἁγιάζω ἐμαυτὸν, for their sakes I make myself holy.* Christ *was* holy, but, being under imputed sin, he added to himself holiness from without, that he might be an example to those under actual sin, and that those, who were his, might be instructed to do the same, and how to do it. He did it for their sake, *ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ὦσιν ἡγιασκένοι ἐν ἀληθείᾳ, that they also might be made holy in the truth.*

the Christian is to look for the influences of the Spirit of God.

After that Jesus Christ had begun his career, by an act which shewed how entirely he intended to be an example in his own person of all that was required by the Gospel, namely, by coming with the promiscuous multitude of Israelites to John's baptism of repentance, though himself without sin, because the doing so was a part of righteousness, then it was that a sign, or token, of what his own baptism was to be, was given him from the clouds of heaven; the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him,"* "and John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him, and I knew him not, but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."† But not only did the Holy Ghost descend from heaven, and remain on him externally, as a sign that he was invested with authority to baptize with

* Luke iii. 22. † John i. 32, 33.

the same baptism, but it also entered into his heart and dwelt there, giving him the power to execute aright the mission he was ordained to fulfil. It was the presence of this Spirit within him, which gave him utterance to testify, as a man sent from God, that which, as God, he had "seen and heard." It was this that gifted his mortal nature with that prescience which belongs to, or is the gift of, Deity alone, and that in a higher degree than it had done any other son of man, inasmuch as it was given him "without measure." It was this, and not his own divine nature, which spake all the words of God; for John bare record of him, "he whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God, for," or *because*, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."*

* John iii. 34. A divine nature in the Redeemer was absolutely necessary for the completion of man's redemption, because without it there would have been *a deficiency of power*; but, during the period that the Redeemer, in his character of man was satisfying the divine law by perfect obedience, this nature was necessarily lost sight of, and it was as a man, dependent upon God, that Jesus worked out salvation upon earth. If it had not been so, it would have been God fulfilling his own law. Accordingly, although St. John most unequivocally asserts that "the Word was God," yet, when this Word is made flesh, he is thrown back into dependence upon God; God *sends* him, and God *gives him* his Spirit. And this

The Spirit was given him without measure, without limitation, either of time or quantity; his soul was a temple, in which it dwelt in all its fulness, and where it dwelt always, as in a habitation; where its operations met with no impediment or obstacle; it abode with him so long as he bore the weight of our sins upon his head; and when, from the external violence of his foes, his soul and body underwent that separation to which all mortality is liable, it brought back his soul from the deep dwellings of departed spirits; and, restoring it to its fleshy tabernacle, quickened it into that which was to be now everlasting life, "for Christ also hath once suffered, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."*

Having thus established the fact, that Jesus the Christ was aided by the Holy Ghost, we now proceed to inquire, *why it was that he was thus aided?* It could not be his divine nature that required it, for he

dependence Jesus himself acknowledged, even when he was authenticating his mission by working the most stupendous miracles, as John xi. 41; v. 19.

* 1 Pet. iii. 18.

was, as God, of one substance, power, and eternity with the Spirit that dwelt within him; it was then his human nature, which for us was made sin, which was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," being "in all points tempted like as we are;"* and if that which was conceived by the Holy Ghost himself, and without sin, was by the mere contagion of our infirmities so weakened as still to require his supporting power, how much more must we, who at the best are sprung from disobedient and rebellious creatures, and ourselves equally estranged from the love of God, find that of ourselves we cannot stand; that we must struggle in vain against the weakness of the flesh, without the aid of some mighty and prevailing hand.

There have been those who have been hardy enough to maintain the sufficiency of the human powers, that they could by unassisted reason alone, search out the deep things of God, and fathom the secrets of the Divine mind; that temptation was harmless against their principle of virtue;

* Heb. iv. 15.

that they wanted nothing beyond the resources of their own wills to render them proof against the evils of mortality. I believe that there are many who, if not in words, yet uphold these sentiments in practice, or at least act as if they intended to do so. There are few who, when they would understand heavenly things aright, really and from the heart, ask the aid of the Spirit of God to guide them unto all truth; there are few who habitually call it in as their ally against every surrounding temptation: there are few who so sensibly feel their weakness, as to understand why it is ever needed for the helping our infirmities; there are few who take it into their hearts, to be their strength and support in the hour of affliction and sorrow; and why is all this, but that they depend upon their own sufficiency, and their own strength, and their own powers? But let such men look to Christ, and behold the Spirit descending upon him, and remaining on him, and abiding in his heart without measure, speaking within him the words of God, supporting him in temptation, soothing him in agony, and at last raising him from the

dead, and then say whether they stand less in need of it, whether they are more independent of their Eternal Father. It cannot be: if Christ's human nature needed the Spirit of God, it must be necessary for ourselves; and we conclude also, that as it was bestowed on Christ, so also will God send it to us, among those other "good and perfect gifts" which he has promised to them that ask him.*

Having thus ascertained that the Holy Ghost does influence the hearts of those

* We may here observe, that although the inference is not expressly stated in the text, yet the conclusion is evident, that it is in Christian baptism that we are to look for the first infusion at least, of the Holy Spirit into the heart. If the example of Christ be a warrant for our anticipating the gift of the Spirit at all, it is equally a warrant for our anticipating it at the same time, and in the same manner; that is, as with him the baptism with water became a baptism with the Holy Ghost, so it does with us, and the sign in baptism, and the thing signified, are not, and cannot be separated. But we must conclude further, that this is not the case unless the rite be performed by an authorized minister of God. It is Christ "which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," John i. 33; and that cannot be said to be his baptism, or to be performed by him, which is not performed by one delegated by himself. Nor do I see how any can now be said to be delegated by him, who have not received their commission in succession from those whom he himself vested with power and authority to baptise.

who are partakers of the life and death of Jesus, that is, of every real Christian, we are now at liberty to have recourse to other parts of Scripture, to discover what may be its operations. And, by the grace of God, we may now do it without fear of misinterpreting by taking what appears to be the plain meaning of the passages selected; for, if our argument holds good, the very fact of the Spirit descending in a "*bodily shape*" upon Christ, proves that those passages which mention its operations do not allude to any *general* exercise of God's power over our wills, but a *particular* influence of his Spirit, distinct from that directing and superintending care which orders aright the system of things that be.

I. In the first place we collect, that *the Holy Ghost revealeth the will of God.*

In the first ages of the Church, when the infant society stood in more need of the guidance and direction of a superior power, the Holy Ghost assumed a more manifest control over the wills of men than it does in these days. Not that the belief and

conduct of good men does not now frequently take its origin from its suggestions in their hearts; for this we shall find we are bound to admit; but that we are not now, as then, able to pronounce upon its operating presence. The inspired teachers of Christianity *knew* when the Holy Ghost spoke to them. It is recorded, that "while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit *said* unto him, Behold three men seek thee;"* that "the Holy Ghost *said*, Separate me Barnabas and Saul."† We must not, however, suppose, that because the voice of the Spirit does not speak so clearly, or so loudly, as it was wont to do, it is therefore silent, and has ceased to reveal unto us the will of God. No; the "Spirit of God" is made the "Spirit of Christ,‡ and Christ has promised that "he shall teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance;"§ that "the Spirit of truth will guide us unto all truth,"‖ and "testify of him."¶ St. Paul too tells us, that "the things which God hath prepared for them

* Acts x. 9. † Acts xiii. 2. ‡ Rom. viii. 9.
§ John xv. 26. ‖ John xvi. 13. ¶ John xvi. 26.

that love him, God reveals them by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God;"* and that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."† If this be true, what shall we say to the conduct of those men who expect to comprehend aright the doctrines of the Gospel, and to appreciate properly its promised privileges, without once applying for this necessary assistance; and when we learn that it is "to them that obey him"‡ that "God hath given it," and that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them,"§ where is the wonder that the Gospel is to this day a matter of discussion? The creeds of the wicked must ever be as discordant as their dispositions; and as they do not influence their practice (though oftentimes the practice forms the creed), it matters little what they are. The faith of the righteous can never differ in any essential point, for to

* 1 Cor. ii. 10. † Rom. viii. 16. ‡ Acts v. 32.
§ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

them God gives his Spirit, and he will guide them unto all truth.

II. Again, *the Holy Ghost sanctifieth.*

Spiritual knowledge and holiness go hand in hand, for those to whom the Holy Ghost reveals the will of God, the same it sanctifies or makes holy, by dwelling in their hearts. The natural inclinations frequently lead to that which all laws condemn, but it is impossible that a spiritualised will should fix its affections upon any thing but what is holy, and agreeable to the nature of the great ordainer of all righteousness, the perfect God himself. We learn that "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth;"* and again, "that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance;"† and St. Paul, addressing the Corinthian church, assures them, that unrighteousness was incompatible with the presence of the Spirit; "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and such *were* some of you, but ye *are* washed, but

* Eph. v. 9. † Gal. v. 22, 23.

ye *are* sanctified, but ye *are* justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit of our God.** My brethren, I need scarcely tell you what the righteousness of the Spirit is; it is faith in Christ as our great Redeemer, and Propitiation for our sins; it is love and gratitude towards God as our Merciful Father; it is full, free, undoubting obedience to all that he commands. Come then, and let us see by your lives whether you have the Spirit. Do you cast away the works of the flesh, and when "ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable servants?"† Do you love God with a holy love, such a love as will make you dread to offend him, and fear nothing so much as his displeasure? Do you bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in thought, word, and action, measuring them all by what you suppose to be his will? If not, what have you in your hearts? Not the Spirit of God, but the spirit of uncleanness; and will that, think you, incline you to repentance, and its works meet for itself? Will that point out Jesus Christ as the Mighty Mas-

* 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11. † Luke xvii. 10.

ter, the Holy Teacher, the complete example of all professors of the Gospel? Will that instruct you more perfectly in the way of life? Will it not rather harden your hearts, close your eyes against the light of knowledge, and deliver you over, for ever the sworn servants of him who will reward your willing obedience by dungeons, and chains, and darkness? O! cast away this odious guest, and welcome him who purifieth and maketh holy, who washeth and sanctifieth the heart. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."*

III. Again, *the Holy Ghost helpeth our Infirmities.*

By infirmities, I mean the weakness of our mortal nature—the weakness which makes it the victim of temptation from without and from within—the weakness which confines our knowledge so that "the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness" unto us, and we know not what to ask of our Heavenly Father—the weakness which

* Gal. v. 16.

sets us at the mercy of earthly vicissitudes, to make or mar our happiness. There are none who, unless their minds be indeed darkened, can be otherwise than sensible of manifold infirmities. None who cannot call to mind good resolutions which have produced no fruit, wishes and prayers for gifts which have been refused in mercy, joy given birth to, or destroyed by the vicissitudes of an earthly day. Such infirmity it is that the Spirit aideth. When "the good that we would we do not, but the evil which we would not, that we do,"* the Spirit maketh those "that walk after the Spirit," to mind the things of the Spirit," and not "the things of the flesh."† When "we know not what we should pray for as we ought, the Spirit itself also maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."‡ When the "soul is exceeding sorrowful," the Spirit turns the thoughts

* Rom. vii. 19. † Rom. viii. 5. ‡ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

from the darkness and clouds, which in this world obscure the horizon of our prospect, to heavenly abodes of life and peace, so that we "reckon that the sufferings of this present life, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."* Who can estimate the blessings of such a gift?—To be made strong against temptation, against the allurements of sinful pleasure without, and the suggestions of Satan in our own hearts, by the power of the Spirit of God;—to know that, however inadequate or injudicious in themselves, however imperfectly expressed our prayers may be, the same Spirit, when we pray, is asking of God for us "every good gift and every perfect gift,"† so that we receive not according to that which we do ask;—to feel that, supported by his aid, the Christian is, though "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;"‡ and to apprehend, in all its fulness of peace and joy, the glorious truth, that nought can "separate us from the love of Christ;" neither "tribula-

* Rom. viii. 18. † James i. 17. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 9.

tion, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword;" "nay," that "in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us." "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

IV. Again, *the Holy Ghost assureth us of Adoption by God.*

Here is the end and aim of all that has been done for us by God, of the revelation of his will, of the teaching of Jesus Christ, of the propitiation offered by him for our sins, of the sanctification and supporting power of the Holy Ghost, that we may become by adoption children of the Everlasting God. By nature we are children of a mortal father, and therefore heirs of his mortality; and if we can lay claim to any other inheritance, it must be that we have been adopted by him who has that inheritance to bestow. We must renounce our

* Rom. viii. 35, 39.

descent from the first sinful Adam, the father of death, and become sons of that "second Adam," the father of life and immortality, which is God in Christ, made manifest in the flesh.* It is the in-dwelling Spirit that seals us to this Sonship, "for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;"† wherefore it is also called the "Spirit of Adoption," and this is what is meant by being *born of the Spirit.* It is the in-dwelling Spirit which "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." What a glorious privilege must this Sonship be! when "God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father,"‡ well may we be said to be born again, to be regenerate, for how great is the change we undergo! Thus it is that we have power to discern the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ, which "the natural man receiveth not;"§ thus it is that we are made partakers of the divine nature; thus it is, that God looking upon us as dear sons, "will not suffer us to be tempted above

* 1 Cor. xv. 47. † Rom. viii. 14. ‡ Gal. iv. 6.
§ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

that we are able,"* but sustains us with a father's hand through the trials and afflictions, the tribulation and sorrow of the world; thus it is, that when the Christian yields up his spirit into the hands of God that gave it, he resigns it as to a faithful Creator and loving Father, who will welcome him into mansions of rest and peace, when his weary pilgrimage is past and done.

My brethren, what is the Gospel which we have here been able, by the grace of God, to build upon the foundation which is laid, which is Jesus Christ? It is that we are ignorant, but that God by his Spirit shed abroad upon our hearts, will guide us unto all truth; that "the carnal mind is enmity against God,"† but that the Spirit sanctifies and makes holy; that we are by nature weak and helpless, but that the Spirit supports and upholds us; that we are children of unrighteousness and heirs of wrath, but that God adopts us as his own, and bestows on us all the privileges of sons. This is the Gospel of the Spirit; and if we have by *repentance* made ourselves meet for its reception, what other can we do, than

* 1 Cor. x. xiii. † Rom. viii. 7.

entreat the Lord God of Heaven and Earth to make us partakers of the baptism of his dear Son? Merciful Father, pour down thy Spirit into our hearts, and let thy Holy Ghost abide within us! Thus guide us unto all truth, sanctify us unto all righteousness, strengthen us against all temptation, aid us in every trial, comfort us in every sorrow, accept us as thy own sons, and make us heirs, joint-heirs with Christ, of his glorious and everlasting inheritance.

This in His name we ask, for it is His Spirit we entreat,* and in His name that it is sent.†

* Rom. viii. 9. † John xvi. 26.

LECTURE III.

ADOPTION BY GOD. JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD.

MATT. III. 17.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

IT was asserted in the preceding lecture, as part of the Gospel of the Spirit, that those who with Christ are partakers of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in, and influencing their hearts, do, by adoption, become sons of the most High God, and consequently heirs of all the privileges appertaining to such a Sonship. This, however, was rather assumed than proved; for though it was collected from the words of inspiration, and therefore undoubtedly to be received, yet we cannot claim a right to insert in this our Gospel, this doctrine of adoption by God,

unless we can derive it from Christ himself. We can indeed call God, "Father," without any Gospel, for it requires no revelation to assure us, that "in the beginning" all things proceeded from him, that he created us and preserved us, and that thus we are his "offspring;"* but we may not, according to our present plan, conclude beyond this, that Christians are in a peculiar manner, by a near and intimate relationship, "children of the Highest," till we have shewn that the man Christ Jesus, whom God sent into the world to proclaim glad tidings of salvation, was himself the Child of God, in a manner different from that in which the natural man styles the Creator of himself and all things, Father.

Now Jesus Christ was, in fact, the first of a new creation. The first man, Adam, is said to be peculiarly the "Son of God,"† in that he was formed, without the intervention of earthly parents, immediately by the hand of Deity, animated by his breath,‡ and stamped with his own image;§ but Adam renounced his natural parentage, and

* Acts xvii. 28. † Luke iii. 38. ‡ Gen. ii. 7.
§ Gen. i. 27.

his natural inheritance, so that men like himself can, through him, claim no relationship with God. If they wish to be partakers of the divine nature, and thus made meet for heavenly places, they must be so from a resemblance to some other of their race; they must look to some other son of God, with whom they can claim brotherhood, for an assurance that they themselves will be counted "children of the Highest." Such a son of God the Scripture points out to us in Jesus. He was the son of man, for he was born of a mortal parent, but earthly father he had none; he drew his existence, as a man, fresh from the eternal fountain of all life and being, and in the womb of the blessed Virgin, was conceived by the Spirit of the Most High God. These are the words in which the Messenger of Heaven announced to his sainted mother, that the Lord would "create a new thing on the earth."* "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of

* Jer. xxxi. 22.

God;"* "thy child shall be a son conceived by God by his Holy Ghost: he shall lay in thy womb the first seeds of his being, and he shall be his own, his own-begotten and beloved son.

It could not be otherwise, than that the offspring of the Virgin would be aware of his glorious descent, and would ground upon it the right and power he assumed, of teaching a new covenant, of declaring the yet unrevealed will of God, and hereafter coming as the Lord, and Prince, and Judge of all created things. And thus in truth he gives his reason for his actions; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;"† and thus he asserts that his humanity shall be glorified by the glory of God his Father, "The Son of Man cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."‡ The Father himself, too, pronounced by a miraculous voice uttered from amidst the clouds, that Jesus was his Son,§ a Son above all other creatures, none of whom he had ever so pre-eminently distinguished—a Son begotten as none other had been before or

* Luke i. 35. † John v. 17. ‡ Mark viii. 38.
§ Matt. iii. 17.

since, or ever shall be.* And if we wish for other Scriptural proofs that Jesus was directly sprung from God, they are easily found. He hath received the title of God's "Own Son;" † and St. Paul styles God "Father," as being pre-eminently the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.‡

I think the fact is now sufficiently established, that Jesus Christ, whose disciples and followers we profess to be, was, in his human nature, by birth the Son of the Most High God, and thus we have a secure foundation on which to build our own animating and steadfast faith, for we are assured that what he was we may be. St. Paul tells us, "we are made partakers of Christ," § and in nothing does this more clearly appear than in this, that we do in him become so nearly and intimately related to our God, that he regards us as his dear children, as brethren of that beloved Son in whom he is well pleased. "Whom God did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be *conformed to the image of his Son*, that he might be the *first-born among many brethren;*" ‖

* Acts xiii. 33. † Rom. viii. 32. ‡ 2 Cor. xi. 31.
§ Heb. iii. 14. ‖ Rom. viii. 29.

and thus we are the brethren of Jesus, and he claims only that superiority over the faithful Christian, which is due by right unto the first-born, and not that which appertains to the son of a more excellent and more perfect father. And again, the Apostle tells us, that "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* He was made of our nature, that we in turn might in all things be made like unto him. And again, he says, that "He that sanctifieth," by whom is meant Christ, "and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren,"† that is, they who partake of his obedience prove themselves sprung from the same source, and therefore have a claim of brotherhood, which claim He is not ashamed to acknowledge, even now that He has sat down for ever at the right hand of glory, and has left us at an immeasurable distance by entering upon the fruition of his reward. Nay, he acknowledged it with his own lips, at the moment when, having overcome death and the grave, he was about to take

* Gal. iv. 4, 5. † Heb. ii. 11.

possession of his incorruptible inheritance. Thus he spake—this consolation he left with us, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father;"* *first his Father and then ours*, "*not therefore his because ours, but therefore ours because his;*"† and, in that he hath received him, also about to welcome us into the same glorious mansions.

It appears then, that we are capable of becoming in our nature so far like unto Jesus Christ, as to be with him sons of God, his brethren. But the question now

* John xx. 17.

† Pearson on the Creed, Article I.—Of course the proofs which have been adduced in favour of the actual Sonship of Jesus Christ, have respect only to his human nature. And the reason is evident. His eternal relationship with the Father, which was before the worlds, could not affect us by way of example, nor the fact of its existence be supposed to have had any connexion with our interests, since it would have been equally existent, had the creation of man never entered into the counsels of the Divine mind. While, on the contrary, that he was able, in his human nature, to claim God as his Father, was clearly one of the privileges of his own Gospel, since none born of a woman could have stood in that relation to God unless freed by atonement from the curse of original guilt, a privilege therefore which most intimately concerns ourselves. It is his relationship to God as a man, which enables us to say of God, "*Therefore our Father, because his;*" a conclusion we could never arrive at, from the station he assumes as the Second Person in the glorious Trinity.

meets us, are *all* thus "made partakers of Christ? Do *all* thus find in God a Father ready to pronounce on them the benediction of beloved children, and to welcome them to heavenly rest? Alas! by brethren, we cannot with truth return you the answer that our soul yearns for. The same Scripture, that tells how Christ "is the first-born among many brethren," points also to "children of wrath," who have neither part nor lot in the inheritance. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,"* but to no others does that distinction belong. And where are we to look for those who receive Christ and believe on his name? Are they the persons we generally meet with in the world? Can the crowds that daily pass

* John i. 12. In one sense, all who have been baptized are, or certainly have been, sons of God, for they have received the Spirit, which is "the Spirit of Adoption," Rom. viii. 15. But that relationship cannot be supposed to last longer than the influences of the Spirit, which effect it last; therefore if, when a man is of sufficient age to exercise the will responsibly, he quenches those influences, the relationship must be at an end, and at an end till renewed by the operations of the same Spirit which first gave it birth.

before us on the stage of life, be said to have received Christ? Do they appear to be guided and actuated by this one notion, that it was that they might resemble him that they were placed here by God, and that they might so pass through things temporal, as finally to lose not the things eternal? But little reflection is required to supply the answer. They are comparatively few who are so partakers of Christ as to be with him sons of God. Or let us bring the matter a little closer to ourselves. *[Are all here sons of God? Surely we shall find them here—here in his own holy temple—here with his name upon every lip, and every ear open to listen to the voice of his word? Will his enemies enter here into his immediate presence? Will they come to mock him by a seeming reverence, as the enemies of earthly princes blind their victims to their designs by more than usual attention; forgetting, that unlike the powers of this world, his eye is on

* In family reading, the passage in brackets may be read thus:—"*Are all here sons of God; here, with his name upon our lips, and our ears open to listen to the voice of his word?*"

them when far away from the courts of his house, and that he hears the first word of blasphemy they utter, aud beholds the first act of rebellion, the first evil deed they do after they have turned their backs upon his doors?] This is a question I cannot, dare not, answer. That those who neither receive, nor believe, nor love Christ, do come and call Him Father, who is the God and Father of him, who by their lives they set at nought, is what no one can deny; but we will turn our eyes to the more cheering prospect, and offer thanks to God with heartfelt gratitude, that so many can be found to wait upon his courts in holy fear and ardent love, with becoming reverence, and an unequivocal spirit of pure filial obedience. Who they are that do thus, rests between God and your consciences; human eye cannot fathom the secret chambers of the heart, nor pronounce with unerring certainty between real and professing Christians; but we are permitted to know, that such as do come to the preaching of the gospel with an earnest desire to gather from it the way of salvation, that such as do lift up their hearts to God in a sense of

guilt and weakness, and with humble submission ask for "repentance and his Holy Spirit," that such are at least not far from his kingdom; and that when their faith is made perfect in love, as, if they persevere, it shortly will be, Christ will not be ashamed to call them brethren, and will present them as such before the throne of *his* Father and *their* Father.

When Jesus was first declared to be the Son of God, openly in the face of the world, by a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," the Holy Ghost had just descended in a bodily shape, and remaining on him, took up its abode in his heart. We learn from this how we ourselves become sons of God. We cannot be by nature as he was, for we can have no part in his conception by "the power of the Highest," but we can be by the agency of the same Spirit that sat in a visible form upon him, when his eternal Father acknowledged the dear relationship. Thus it is that they who ask, with faith in Christ, for repentance and the Holy Spirit, become sons of God: those he listens to who ask in Jesus'

name believing: He gives his Spirit to guide unto righteousness those who repent of, and would forsake their sins, and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,"* and are thus made like unto Jesus Christ.

They are made partakers of his sonship in two ways.

I. First, by adoption.

II. Secondly, by regeneration.

I. Christians are said by St. Paul to be "predestinated to the *adoption* of children,"† and, therefore, the Holy Ghost is called by the same apostle, "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father."‡ Now as adopted sons are not the children by nature of him they call father, but being sprung from some other parent, are, from love and affection, taken and treated as children by one with whom they were before connected by no such intimate tie, this case exactly corresponds with our own circumstances with God. We are by nature children of erring and mortal beings, "shapen in iniquity and conceived in

* Rom. viii. 14. † Eph. i. 5. ‡ Rom. viii. 15.

sin,"* and thus born heirs of sin and its consequence, death; for "death hath passed upon all men, in that all have sinned."† We are not born, like Christ, sons of God; we are not, like him, conceived by the Holy Ghost: if then God takes us for his children it is by adoption; he takes us from our "fathers after the flesh," and unites us to himself after the Spirit; he considers the sons of men his own sons, because he has loved them and wished to confer on them a blessed and everlasting inheritance, and therefore, St. John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be *called* the sons of God."‡

II. But, secondly, Christians are his sons by regeneration.

When God has given us the Spirit of adoption, that Spirit works within us so great a change that we are said to be born again, to be regenerate by its operations. New principles are born within us, new motives actuate us, new wishes and desires spring up in our hearts. The Spirit of God

* Psalm li. 5. † Rom. v. 12. ‡ 1 John iii. 7.

cannot abide in any one without producing a great and effectual change. This change is called in scripture, being born of God, a regeneration, a second birth unto God and immortality after that original birth which was unto sin and mortality; a second birth which restores the image of God after which our race was originally formed, and which stamped them the children of the Highest. Thus we learn that "to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on his name: which were *born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;"* "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."† And again, it is said of those who have received Christ, "according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."‡

What shall we say then of this second birth? Is not God our Father: are we not the brethren of the first-born Christ? Are we not those who are *born of the Spirit*,

* John i. 12, 13. † 1 Pet. i. 23. ‡ Titus iii. 5.

brethren of him who was *conceived by the Holy Ghost?* Well did Christ teach us, when we pray, to say, "Our Father," for if our creation as men, through earthly parents, gives God the name, how much more shall this second creation, by his own immediate agency, and after his own image, entitle us to approach him as sons, and with an assurance that our claim will not be overlooked or neglected? The Spirit of adoption cries in our hearts, "Abba, Father,"* and not only that, but bids us be sensible of a new birth, a spiritual existence, derived from God himself, and commencing at his bidding, even as at his word the elements of all things were called forth from nothingness, to the life and light of obedience.†

And what is the end of all this? Is it

* Gal. iv. 6.

† I have considered it needless to discuss the controverted subject of *regeneration in baptism.* The fact that the Holy Ghost does wait upon the rite when duly administered, has, I think, been most firmly established, and it matters little what term is used to express the *immediate* effect of its operations on the heart. It is unquestionable that wherever they are allowed to work, unstifled by human will and human frailty, the effect must be regeneration, and equally so whether the Spirit be given in the earliest years, or at a subsequent period of life.

nothing but a speculation of lifeless doctrine, a mere isolated fact that produces no good fruits? Ah! is it nothing to be a son of God? Or is it not rather our greatest privilege, our highest exaltation, our safety and security here, and our earnest of inconceivable glory and happiness hereafter? What! is it nothing to be "children of the Highest," of the Omnipotent and Everlasting God? What stronger assurance can we have that all things are working together for our good, that his eye is ever upon us, his arm ever shielding us from ill, and his hand guiding and directing us through the changes and vicissitudes of life? Surely this is something; surely the most abandoned scorner must allow that the Christian has some cause to rejoice, that he is with Christ born again unto the Almighty Head of the universe. What can he ask in prayer which, if needful or meet for him, God will not grant? What is there of things good and convenient, which in his blindness he cannot ask, or which in his foolishness are distasteful to him, which will not be provided by the same affectionate care? My brethren, let us for a

moment consider this matter as we ought to do; let us cast away for a while, if so we are able, our feelings of human infirmity, and view aright this glorious doctrine. What wishes have we formed which our efforts have failed to gratify? Is not God our Father, and would he not, had it been expedient for us, have removed obstacles or facilitated the execution of our plans? What prayers have we offered which have been apparently unheeded? Is not God our Father, and is it not therefore in love and mercy that he has refused to grant our petitions? What was it of his dispensations that last seemed grievous unto us, and brought with it sorrow and grief and tears? Is not God our Father, and would he unnecessarily cast burdens on his children, or afflict them here, unless it were needful to promote the welfare which is not of this world? Or if we take this present time, and view ourselves assembled here [in his consecrated temple],* offering up petitions for daily support and daily preservation, for blessings here and

* To be omitted in family reading.

glory hereafter, what ground have we for believing that even the strong crying of fervent prayer will be listened to by that great invisible Being, who sitteth above the heavens, or that if it is heard by Him it will be with compassion, and the will to answer by good gifts those inadequate entreaties which, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, are ever ascending from this earth as from an altar? Is not God our Father? and is not that a sufficient pledge that his ear is ever open to the voice of our calling, and that there is no supplication, however ignorantly, or however imperfectly expressed, which he does not heed according to the fulness of his knowledge, and, if consistent with his wisdom, grant? Or if we look forward a few short years, or months, or days, and image to ourselves this body reft of life and animation, its parts disunited, its materials scattered, no longer a tabernacle of the immortal spirit for whose habitation it was formed, at whose pleasure it moved and acted; what is the futurity we must assign to the now houseless tenant, still living on, still thinking and feeling, still capable of experiencing

the extremes either of agony or delight? If God were not our Father, all would be apprehension, doubt, and darkness; but now when the Christian, after a life spent under the eye of his fostering parent, at last renders Him his soul, though there is no place for idle rapture or confident boldness, yet the last feeble tones of mortality, "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," supply an assurance of more than hope, a strong conviction that Almighty care will be extended beyond the confines of this world, will still guide and protect, still love and bless the being God has owned and acknowledged as his son.

Let then, I say, the most abandoned scorner, the most heartless profligate, view the true Christian in his life and death; let him view him patient under disappointment, resigned in sorrow, glowing with all the confidence of hope when he offers up his petitions to God his Father, for blessings here and glory hereafter, and when the world is becoming as nothing to him, directing his ardent gaze to heavenly mansions to which he claims the right of a son's inheritance, and

surely even he will allow that it is something to be a son of God. Nay, a wish may perhaps cross his mind, that he might be even such a one as he is, a passing feeling of regret that for him there is no such consolation, no such hope.—And is he then excluded from it? Is he shut out from it for ever? God forbid that we should so limit the mercies of our heavenly Father! all that, with repentance and faith, believe in and receive his beloved Son Jesus Christ, may be made like unto him, and with him become sons of God. But then, if we take God for our Father, it implies that we must observe towards him the filial behaviour of sons, that we must serve him with fear, reverence, and love, and this it is that is distasteful to the carnal mind, this it is that prompts it to claim kindred with others, rather than with that holy child, who will set them an example only of patience and self-denial, of submission and implicit obedience. God's sons may not be conformed to the world; God's sons may not indulge in sinful pleasure; they are to be "followers of

God as dear children,"* obeying him in all things, and ever anxious to do his will. They must too imitate their Father, that they may be indeed his sons, that the new birth may be completed which shall entitle them to call themselves, by grace, the regenerated children of the Holy Ghost. "As obedient children," says St. Peter, "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation: because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."† This is the reason why so many are yet far from Christ, why they refuse to receive him and believe on his name. They wish not to incur what they suppose to be an additional obligation to obedience to the divine law; they wish not, as yet at least, to assume a station which implies an imitation of that which is perfectly just and holy, and a consequent abandonment of all that exciting and alluring glare of folly which seems so good and excellent in

* Eph. i. 5. † 1 Pet. i. 14, 15, 16.

their eyes; they know that "whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God," while to them the pleasures of sin are too delightful, too essential, to be given up for a distant prospect of reward, however great. Deluded men! are they aware that even though they *could* get rid of the obligation to obedience, they are still liable to the dreadful alternative, that everlasting death is not only the punishment inflicted on the disobedience of those to whose exclusive services God claims a right, but that it is the patrimony to which all of human race are born, and that they cannot escape it unless they become, in Christ, sons of Him who is able and willing to bestow an excellent inheritance, though he does, at the same time, exact obedience to a holy law, and, as far as human infirmity will allow, an imitation of his own glorious perfections.

My brethren, think what it is to be other than a son of God; think what it is to be born of aught but the Spirit; think what it is to be dependent on your own resources here and hereafter. "Except a

man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,"* therefore none but his sons are admitted into his presence by the eternal Father. What there may be away from his presence, what is signified by the "outer darkness" we cannot tell, but we must anticipate horrors which imagination cannot reach, and the reality of which must appal the stoutest heart. If, then, you meditate aright on these things, you will not lose a moment in earnestly striving so to receive Christ, and so to believe on his name, that you may be with him born of God, with him partakers of the incorruptible inheritance which is the portion of the "children of the Highest."†

* John iii. 3. † Luke vi. 35.

LECTURE IV.

PRACTICAL HOLINESS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE LIFE OF JESUS.

LUKE X. 37.

Go, and do thou likewise.

HE must have taken a very careless and negligent view of the doctrines of the Christian faith, who has not perceived how exactly they every one of them lead in practice to the same effect, how invariably the fruit of each, as it becomes an operating principle, is holiness. I am the more particular in insisting upon this point, because faith has, by the perverted ingenuity of men, been made answerable for very great laxity of life and conduct; instead of being made the parent of virtue, it has

been put in the place of virtue, and its presence has been asserted to supersede the necessity of obedience to any law except that of human will, or human inclination. We need not stay, in this place, to examine the arguments upon which such sentiments are founded, for we have evidence to bring against them which at once overturns every possibility of their correctness, however specious and plausible they may be made to appear. We have seen hitherto that each article of faith implies a belief in the existence of that which, if it does exist, can operate in no other way, on those who claim an interest in it, than by producing abandonment of sin, sanctification of the affections, and an imitation of divine perfection; and it is utterly impossible that the putting these articles together, that this combination into that body of belief which is called the Christian faith, should so alter the nature of the things believed, should render them so lifeless and inefficient, as that collectively they should fail to produce that which we are bound to suppose it is the office of each individually to give birth to. The necessary effect of the

whole gospel, so far as we have hitherto been able to ascertain its doctrines, is holiness of heart and mind, manifested by a corresponding holiness of conduct. Repentance, the preparation for the Gospel, implies the casting away and renunciation of all sinful and unholy desires; the presence of the Holy Spirit sanctifies, or makes holy, the heart wherein it dwells; and adoption by God brings with it the obligation of obedience to a holy law, and of imitation of a perfectly holy Being.

It seems, then, that he who has not holiness, has as yet made no use of the doctrines of the Gospel; that they are to him a dead letter; that in fact, they are no Gospel at all. But how are we to ascertain the presence of this essential proof of our being partakers of the benefits of God's mercy towards men? how are we to know what holiness is?—Holiness is that which begins with penitence, is strengthened by prayer, and is perfected by the Spirit; and it is found complete in him who, as a partaker of the image of God, imitates the actions and affections of his perfect Father.

But here it may be objected, that God is a being far beyond the sphere of our imitation; that we have nothing in common with him; that his nature is so highly exalted above our own, as to prove it to be different in kind, rather than superior in degree; and that even could we propose him to ourselves as a pattern, his ways are often unsearchable, and his judgments past finding out. All this is true; if the great God himself were the example set before us, it is not often that we should find it available. We can indeed derive from him general principles by which to fashion ourselves, as that our hearts must be pure, our affections spiritualised, our words faithful and true, and our actions merciful and just; but, when we come to put these rules in practice, our ignorance still stands in our way, and we cannot always tell whether they are observed or not. We are bound to believe, that in such cases the Spirit of God helps our weakness, and enlightens our understandings; but the ascendency of the natural man is often so great, so fiercely does the voice of frail mortality struggle to be heard, that we cannot always

be sure of its operations. That we may be able to pronounce upon them with certainty, we want a standard of feelings and actions to which to refer, the feelings and actions of a being who might be supposed placed in the same situation as we are at the time. In each case of difficulty or doubt, where right and wrong are not clearly distinguished, or not clearly distinguished to ourselves, we would say of our example, "What would He do under these circumstances?" but, if the One Incomprehensible God be our example, we cannot thus refer to him in particulars, because we cannot adduce any instance in which he may be said to have acted under a sense of our infirmity, actuated by our affections and passions, or beset by our temptations.

God, however, in calling upon us to imitate himself and his perfections,* has not imposed on us a task so hopeless as this view of the subject would make it appear. He *has*, most wonderfully and most mercifully, brought his moral attributes down to a level with our capacities; he has shewn us in a manner not to be

* Matt v. 48.

mistaken what it is to be Godly, by shewing us God made manifest in the flesh. God has become man; and not only that, but man, "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and "in all points tempted like as we are,"* man in toil and danger and mournful vicissitude, man in sorrow and affliction, consorting with men in the daily turmoil of active life, more than commonly exposed to their envyings, hatings, and revilings, and to every kind and degree of opposition and ill treatment which are capable of aggravating the evils of mortality, or exasperating the most patient spirit. The Christian who strives to imitate his Heavenly Father, need not now ask in doubt and disquietude, what would God do where he situated as I am? but he may inquire of the faithful oracles of God, with a certainty of being answered, "What has God shewn that man should do under these circumstances, by himself becoming man, and placing himself in them?" This is the way that "the life was manifested, and we have seen it;"† this is the way that God has taught us to conform our-

* Heb. iv. 15. † 1 John i. 2.

selves unto him, after his likeness. He has set before us a man "without spot or blemish," in all things approving himself before God his Father, even "Jesus Christ the righteous," and bids us look to him for an example of that life which is the proper fruit of the Gospel. We need not now, blinded by carnal desires, be ever at a loss to know what it is that genuine repentance will cause us to abhor and forsake; we need not now experience difficulty in distinguishing between the suggestions of the in-dwelling Spirit, and the insidious whispers of human frailty; the man born again unto God, need not now look upon the attributes of his Father, which he is required to imitate, as qualities not exemplified in action, or at least not so exemplified as to supply instances which will serve as guides of his own conduct, when he is endeavouring to put off the likeness of the flesh, and be conformed to that which is spiritual. No! Jesus Christ, when he bade the hearers of the Gospel to be "perfect, even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect," proposed himself as the human model of that perfection, and it is

to him that they must turn their eyes who wish to know aright what the fruits of that Gospel are, and to exhibit them in their own lives. Here there can be no mistake; precepts may be, almost unintentionally, perverted, or their application limited or extended, to serve the carnal purposes of our own wills; but when they are illustrated by the conduct of a whole life, shewing in what spirit they are to be taken, and how and when they are to be made use of, he can be no penitent disciple of Christ Jesus, nor his heart a temple of the Holy Ghost, who knows not how to appreciate them properly.

It is my intention to examine briefly the character of Jesus Christ, in those instances in which we are ourselves most liable to error. The spirit of holiness and obedience, which influenced and shaped his life, may indeed be traced to his minutest actions; but it will answer our purpose to exhibit his excellence in those points where human nature may be said with most propriety to be *tried*, either where the immediate incitements to holiness are fewest, or the obstacles to its attainment, whether meeting

us from without, or arising within ourselves from our own carnal inclinations, are most difficult to be overcome.

I. I shall consider first, His humility and lowliness of mind.

Humility may be said with truth, to be the foundation of all proper religious belief. As long as a man places dependence on himself, he will not go to God. While he thinks highly of his own powers, he cannot well see the necessity of a Gospel. There is the more need to insist upon this, because humility is a quality so very seldom met with in a degree at all approaching to His, whom we are supposed to take for our example. A marvellous instance of wrong-headedness indeed, and sadly mistaken judgment: if he who was strong, if ever the flesh could be called strong; if he who was conscious of a nature free from every stain and contamination of sin, should still feel himself so weakened and bowed down by the imputed sins of others, which did not for a moment injure his own purity, as to cast himself entirely for support on his Heavenly Father; and yet we, who are

fallen below the original powers of our race, themselves proved to be unavailing against external assaults, should each one of us keep his palace, like a strong man armed, as trusting his goods shall be at peace.*—Is it then that a stronger never cometh, and taketh "from him all his armour wherein he trusted?" It cannot be. We might indeed conclude, that experience itself would prove to us how little ground we have for self-confidence, how tottering the foundation on which our pride is built. If but one man could prove to me that he had never fallen, that there never was a time when he had reason to fear that he could not justify himself before God, I would so far abandon my argument, I would allow that there might be some reason for dependence on human strength, though even then I should point to Christ as an example of a different conduct; but now, when every one must be conscious how often he is betrayed into error, nay, how frequently into the commission of that of which he deems himself incapable; confidence, whether it be in our own principles,

* Luke xi. 21.

or our own resolutions, is manifestly inexcusable folly and presumption.

Just as much opposed to Christian humility, is the feeling which prompts us to congratulate ourselves on our own spiritual attainments, as compared with those of other men; the feeling which causes us, like the Pharisee in the parable, to thank God that we are not as other men are. Here, again, the example of Christ condemns us. Do we find him boasting his descent from the Most High God, or of the spirit which constantly dwelt within him? Do we find him assuming any superiority over the wretched aliens from God, with whom his blessed mission of salvation led him to associate? Did he not rather invite the sinner to him, by an assurance that there he should meet with no unseemly triumph, no reproach or upbraiding to embitter his reception of the Gospel? "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."* In me you will find no high-minded teacher, exacting abject submission as the price of his instructions, and damping by visible

* Matt. xi. 29.

contempt, the growing desire to gain the knowledge of the truth; but one who will receive you as his friend, one who has humbled himself for your advantage, and come "not to be ministered unto, but to minister."*

Thus far is the *example of Christ* adverse to the assumption of religious superiority; but there is another thing which shews how contrary this spiritual pride is to the intention of the Gospel; it cannot fail to be accompanied by self-righteousness, than which nothing can more unfit the mind for the reception of Christ in the first instance, or for the comprehension afterwards of the glad tidings which he brought, in any thing like their whole extent of absolute sufficiency for all the sinner's wants. The very act of so comparing ourselves with others, as to draw conclusions favourable to our own spiritual superiority, shews that we are self-righteous; we could not do it unless we supposed that our attainments proved some merit in ourselves, either as having produced them, or as having been selected by God as vessels of his mercy,

* Matt. xx. 28.

from his observing in us something more excellent than in other men. And if we are thus self-righteous, how can we be said to give God the glory which belongs to him, as having done every thing for a fallen race—how can we cast away the works and affections of the old man, when they have stood us in such good stead, as to lead us some few steps at least up the steep of spiritual perfection, and to attract the favourable notice of God himself? Why need we, who can do so much for ourselves, call in the aid of the Spirit to enlighten our understandings, or sanctify our hearts? If we have an assurance that God has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, let us give him the glory, let us return thanks unto him for his great mercy; but oh! let it be with deep humility, with a heartfelt conviction, that but for him we might have been among reprobates and outcasts, with a sense that we can have no right or power to judge men who are, equally with ourselves, objects of God's protecting care, or to claim any superiority of merit over such as appear to be

less advanced in the way towards final salvation.

II. The next point that we shall consider in Christ's character, is his frequent communication with God in prayer.

Christ's humility led him continually to God, to ask of him counsel and strength to guide or support him through the painful office he had imposed on himself. Though we do not find that he made his appeals to heaven ostentatiously and openly, yet his prayers were not on that account less frequent; when he prayed, he obeyed his own beautiful precept, and prayed in secret to his Father which seeth in secret. His own words at the sepulchre of the deceased Lazarus, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I knew that thou hearest me always;"* shew, that his spirit was ever in communion with his Father. We have in Scripture several instances mentioned of his retiring for the express purpose of prayer;† once he is said to have continued in prayer all night. What

* John xi. 41, 42.

† Matt. iv. 23, 26, 29. Luke vi. 12; xi. 1.

it was he found it necessary to ask, we are not told,* except in that awful hour, when his spirit, appalled by the great agony which awaited him, sought to be relieved from that bitter cup of affliction, or, if that could not be, to be taught to drink it with submission, and even with joy. That God answered his prayers we cannot doubt; his own lips assure us as much, as well as visible manifestations of God's favour and acceptance; and in the last affecting crisis, when we are permitted to know how he prayed, we are also permitted to know how he was answered. The great joy which awaited him when the fierce trial should be passed, was set before him, "for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame."† This joy was the prospect of the great salvation

* I mean we are not told what petitions he found it necessary to put up *on his own account*, though doubtless in prayer his spirit communicated with the God and Father of spirits, and received fresh accessions of those divine influences which directed and supported his tempted and suffering humanity. What it was that he asked for the church committed to his care, the comfort, happiness, and glory he prayed and "willed" that they might have, is beautifully recorded in the 17th of St. John.

† Heb. xii. 2.

effected for sinners by his sacrifice. He saw death and hell cast down, and vanquished; he saw the gates of heaven uplifted, and himself conducting to glory innumerable multitudes of redeemed; he saw ten thousand thousand saints, their robes washed and made white in his blood, ministering unto the Father, and himself "set down at the right hand of God;" and for this promise of reward, he endured the agony of the cross, and with his eyes fixed on the eternal inheritance of the saints, despised the shame which his foes and God's, were so eager to cast upon his head.

Thus, my brethren, did Christ pray, and thus was Christ answered. We learn from his example, first, that prayer is a part of holiness; secondly, that it is the means by which the Christian, in difficulty, or doubt, or danger, weighed down by sorrow, harassed by opposition, or beset by temptations, obtains the assistance of his God. It is that prayer which is a part of holiness, which is called forth by no immediate or pressing want, that is most distasteful to the carnal mind. Under the weight of

adverse circumstances, we are ready enough to fly to our Heavenly Friend, but that constant communion of our spirit with the God and Father of spirits, which both reason and the example of Christ unite in declaring most essential, we are often too willing to fly from and escape. It is a lamentable instance of perversity that we should at any time voluntarily forego that here, the uninterrupted enjoyment of which the Christian anticipates as his greatest privilege hereafter; but it is still more lamentable, when its constant neglect shews that the heart is still estranged from God, and still unacquainted with the spiritual blessings of the Gospel.

III. Next let us observe the example Jesus affords us in his readiness to forgive injuries.

If ever a man could be said to be injured by his fellow creatures, that man was Jesus. Descending for their sakes from his high estate; coming down from glory, and majesty, and bliss unspeakable, that he might through his own tears and tribulation rescue them from intolerable woe, how did they receive him! Surely, we shall say, with

gratitude, in some degree proportioned to the benefit he was willing to bestow. Alas! no; instead of that "he was despised and rejected of men; he was oppressed and he was afflicted."* No calumny that hatred could invent was left unsaid against him, no art that malice could devise was left untried, no indignity that cruelty could contrive was forgotten or omitted. He was reviled as an outcast and alien from that people amongst whom and for whose salvation he was born;† his sacred body, conceived by the "power of the Highest," was looked upon with abhorrence as the tabernacle of an unclean spirit;‡ his very miracles exposed him to the imputation of a league with the powers of darkness;§ daily endeavours were made in the most subtle manner to entangle him in his talk, that he might be lowered in the estimation of those who had accepted his affectionate invitations to follow him: and after a course of unwearied diligence in doing good,‖ which might have excited the gratitude and admiration of the most unwilling; of spotless

* Isaiah liii. 3, 7. † John viii. 48. ‡ Idem.
§ Matt. ix. 34. ‖ Acts x. 38.

innocence* which might have convinced the most prejudiced; and patience under suffering† which might have softened the most hard hearted, he was forced to yield up his spirit in agony and torture by a lingering and disgraceful death. All this Christ suffered, and all this Christ forgave. When his disciples besought him that they might call down fire from heaven, even as Elias did, and consume those who would not receive him, he turned and rebuked them for their revengeful spirit, and their ignorance of the nature of his gospel;‡ and when on the cross malice had done its work, his dying words were a prayer, breathed out to God, for the pardon of his unrelenting persecutors. After this, my brethren, what injuries can we adduce which God does not require us to forgive? Of what sort must they be, or how great? Where are we to mark the line of separation between injuries which need, and those which need not be forgiven? It may be a long and weary effort, it may require many a struggle within the secret heart, to enable us to banish resentment from the breast, and especially if

* 1 Pet. ii. 22. † 1 Pet. ii. 23. ‡ Luke ix. 54, 55.

the effects of the injury inflicted be deep and lasting; but both the precept and the example of Christ shew us that it must be done. Let us bear in mind how he forgave; and, however great our wrongs may be, we shall still look upon our enemy as one who may yet claim an interest in Christ's salvation, and pray to the Almighty to turn his heart, with a determination if ever that blessed hour should arrive, to welcome him with joy into the communion of the saints.

IV. If we turn our eyes to Christ's *active life*, what an example do we find of the proper manifestation of the graces of the Holy Gospel. Ever going about doing good,* He compassionated the miserable,† gave rest to the weary and heavy laden,‡ healed bodily infirmities,§ and poured the balm of consolation into the contrite heart‖ and wounded spirit. Ever about his Father's work, he repined not, though he had not where to lay his head.¶ Himself ever submissive to constituted authorities. He has left a religion behind him which en-

* Acts x. 38.
† Luke vii. 13.
‡ Matt. xi. 29.
§ In the Gospels, *passim*.
‖ Luke vii. 47.
¶ Luke ix. 58.

sures, that the best Christian shall ever be the best subject, least needing the coercion of human law, most ready to lend his aid in all emergencies, and willing to bear even more than his own share of the common burdens.

5.* Before I conclude, I would direct the attention of my younger friends to His obedience to His earthly parents. I would shew them how that, sprung from God himself, He was subject unto them, and exhort them to strive diligently to follow his example; to love, honour, and obey their father and mother, and thus begin in their earliest years to shew the blessed fruits of that gospel, which I pray to God may be their stay and support in their perilous journey through this life.

6. Lastly, observe all, how Jesus never yielded to temptation. Though "in all things tempted like as we are, yet not once did he do a deed, utter a word, or harbour a thought which could be construed into a violation of God's law, according to its strictest interpretation. Remember then,

* If no young persons are present to whom it will apply, this section may be omitted in family reading.

that temptation can never be made an excuse for crime; if we sin because we are greatly tempted, most assuredly we shall as greatly fall.

Take then, in the name of God, I beseech you, take Jesus as your pattern and example. With him walk humbly before God and man; with him pour out your spirit in prayer; with him forgive all wrongs; with him comfort and sustain, support and bless; with him be content with whatever may be allotted you; with him resist successfully the temptations of the powers of darkness: and then you may rest assured, that you have come to the hearing of the gospel with hearts meet for its reception, that you have received the gift of the enlightening, guiding, and sanctifying spirit of God, and are partakers with Christ,—with him entitled to the privileges of the sons of God.

LECTURE V.

VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION.—CHRIST IS VICTORIOUS.

1 Cor. x. 13.

God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it.

Evil, from the fatal period of its introduction by the sin of our first parents, up to the present hour, has invariably taken its rise from a prospect, arising in the mind of a thinking being, of some pleasure or advantage to be produced thereby. The Apostle expressed himself well, when he spake of "the *pleasures* of sin for a season."*

* Passions inordinately excited by any external circumstance, towards such objects, at such times, or in such degrees, as that they cannot be gratified consistently with worldly pru-

Fleeting and evanescent they are, and if they were not, who could withstand their influence; but still they are pleasures, delightful to us, according to the present constitution of our natures, while sin is in its first stages, and afterwards habitual, and therefore apparently necessary. If this were not the case, we cannot conceive that man would sin, we cannot conceive that he would be the only creature refusing to fulfil the purposes for which he was created; or if his freedom of choice be alleged as a reason for his alone disobeying the commands of God, the violation of which constitutes sin, we cannot believe that any will, if unbiased by the expectation, whether true or false, of some immediate advantage, would prefer that, the inevitable consequences of which, *death, everlasting death*, are inscribed on tablets more enduring than adamant, and in characters that cannot

dence; are temptations, dangerous, and too often successful temptations, to forego a greater temporal good for a less, i. e. to forego what is, upon the whole, our temporal interest, for the sake of a *present gratification*. This is a description of our state of trial in our temporal capacity. Substitute now the word *future* for *temporal*, and *virtue* for *prudence*, and it will be just as proper a description of our state of trial in our religious capacity."—Butler's Analogy, part i. cap. ii.

be mistaken. No, if sin had nothing to promise, if she could not strew her path with delights, and build up her fairy palaces as meet and pleasant resting-places, whose doors are ever open to welcome the weary traveller to comfort and repose, none would willingly withdraw their steadfast gaze from the bright crown of glory, and the everlasting rest in heavenly mansions, which is the sure reward of the race of obedience.

It is not now our object to discuss *why* the Almighty ruler of all things has so formed his rational creatures, as that they should readily recognize as pleasure, that which is most abhorrent to his own nature, but we may observe that, as things are now constituted, the purposes of their being could not be fulfilled without it. They find themselves placed here with a prospect of everlasting felicity which must be earned, a reward which must be struggled for, and for which, without this struggle, they themselves could not be properly prepared;*

* "The known end why we are placed in a state of so much affliction, hazard, and difficulty, is our improvement in virtue and piety as the requisite qualification for a future state of

and if the victory is in the hands of all; if the enemy, however strong, however insidious, is such a one as may be vanquished, and his spoils borne off triumphantly, if those whose duty and interest it is to oppose him are not traitors to themselves, surely no one can accuse of injustice, that God who has ordained the contest, and supplies the weapons by which it may be brought to a successful issue. When we are battling against temptation, we are, by virtue of the Almighty decree, working out our salvation; each time that the assaults of the adversary are manfully opposed, we render ourselves more secure against future attacks; each victory that we gain, raises us at least one step in the scale of our being, and adds one wreath to the bright emblem of final triumph, hereafter to encircle the brows of those who have fought the good fight and kept the faith.

The motives to sin, be they never so

security and happiness."—Butler's Analogy, part i. cap. 5. The whole argument on "a State of Probation, as intended for moral discipline and improvement," is beautifully stated in the chapter from which the foregoing extract is made, to which therefore I beg to refer the inquiring reader, with an assurance that he will not regret the time spent in its perusal.

urgent, cannot be so strong, as that our nature is not able to resist them; and therefore, the presence of temptation is so far from necessarily committing us to sin and its consequences, that it may, in fact, be the means of leading us to a far more exceeding weight of glory than we should otherwise be able to sustain. This is our assertion, and it is thus we justify the dealings of God with his saints; he tries them in order to reward them, and besides, institutes a trial of such a nature, as that, during its progress, it makes them meet, and prepares them for their reward.

I do not think that any part of this my argument will be objected to by those who have, by God's grace, been in the habit of successfully opposing temptation; they know that there is a strength that overcometh the world and the flesh, and that each time that, by its aid, they prove themselves worthy of their Christian calling, they are drawn nearer to God, and united to him by a more intimate communion; but how shall I be answered by those with whom the warfare has been but a series of defeats, or a course of all but passive sub-

mission? They will allow perhaps the glorious consequences of victory; but many will allege that it cannot be gained, that for them at least this conquest is hopeless, and that, as they cannot purify their hearts by a successful resistance, so they must trust to God's mercy to accept the presence of temptation as an excuse for almost involuntary crime. Deluded men! I will answer you in the words of inspiration. I will shew you from the mouth of God himself, that the magnitude of your temptation does not make your error venial. "There has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it;" and if you have not escaped, if you have not borne it, shall we say that the God of heaven and earth is a liar, and that he has suffered you to be tempted above that ye are able? or rather must we not conclude, that you have indolently and negligently yielded; that you have willingly, and even readily, obeyed the suggestions of your own sensual appe-

tites, and have thus laid up for yourselves wrath against the day of wrath?

Thus much may we conclude from the express declaration of Scripture; but it is a declaration which too often appears to be unknown or forgotten. Else how could men prove themselves so ignorant of revelation, and of the blessed design of Christianity itself, as to plead temptation in the ear of Deity?—thus in effect, addressing him who has promised to be their all sufficient support. "That has happened which thou hast said should not happen, and I therefore stand before thee, an erring creature, but yet, in justice, guiltless in thy sight." I am not here combating an imaginary delusion. That this is the way that men do in fact too frequently answer against God, is daily proved by their actions, and often by their very words. Men sin *because they are tempted*, not *because* they are engaged with an adversary who is too strong for them, and whom, however earnestly they strive, with whatever weapons they may provide themselves, they cannot resist or overcome. They yield, because it is easier for them to yield; they yield, because it is

a pleasure for them to yield; because they thus afford a temporary gratification to their carnal desires, while they cherish a delusive hope, that they shall yet, by some means or other, be able to justify themselves before their righteous judge.*

I shall now endeavour, according to the plan I have hitherto pursued, to illustrate this subject from the history of our Saviour Jesus Christ: and I doubt not but that, with God's blessing, it will lead us to the same conclusion as that already suggested by our text, that God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; and I trust it will also shew us, how it is we may escape, whence it is that power is given to the helpless, and "strength made perfect in weakness."†

In the first place, it will be necessary to prove that Christ was open to temptation; and this is a part of my subject which I cannot approach without great and reasonable apprehension. The errors into which

* See James i. 13, 14. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed."

† 2 Cor. xii. 9.

others have already fallen, the indignities which the Divine Majesty of the Saviour of the world has already suffered, when made subservient to human theories, would alone make me particularly careful not to go one step beyond what the express declaration of Scripture authorizes; yet, even with the revelation of Deity before me, so much of high and holy mystery still hangs about that intimate and indissoluble union of the Creator and the creature, which earth was permitted to behold, that when I come to speak of the *infirmities* of the *human* nature, I cannot but tremble lest I should unknowingly subtract something from that glorious perfection which belongs unalterably to the Divine.

In the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find that St. Paul, illustrating the character of Jesus Christ as our High Priest, asserts his fitness for the office, from the fact that he was capable of being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," and he adds the reason, that "he was in all points tempted like as we are."* In speaking of the temptation of

* Heb. iv. 15.

Jesus Christ, I must, however, in the first place remark, that Scripture affords us no warrant for supposing, that it acted in the same way on him as on ourselves; in us the tempter finds a disposition well disposed to listen to his suggestions, a nature in itself inclined to sin, and therefore in some degree conformed to the gratification of sinful lusts, while the concluding words of the text in the Hebrews from which we have already quoted, "*yet without sin*," as well as other passages, shew that Christ was tempted only so far as a *sinless* being may be; that though the temptations which assailed him were the same as our own, he would not recognize their force in so overwhelming a degree; or at all events, would not add to it by enlisting on its side the weight of naturally depraved inclination. We must not however go so far on this side the question, as to take away the possibility of his falling before them; for, if we do, they will lose their character as temptations. We may find an illustration of the temptations of Christ in those of Adam. Adam was a sinless being, formed after God's own image. God implanted in his heart no evil

passions, no unholy desires, and yet he fell, he fell before the great enemy of souls, and so also Christ in his human nature might have fallen. God forbid that I should assert, or even for a moment entertain the thought, that as he was actually constituted he could have fallen, and yet have continued so constituted. The immaculate Godhead would not have brooked for a moment a combination with a being that had sunk one degree below its created purity. No; let sin once gain admission, and Emanuel was no more, Jesus was no longer God manifest in the flesh. But what I mean is, that his human nature, considered separately, was open to temptation, and therefore in itself capable of falling. And this I shall now endeavour to explain.

In the first place, Jesus Christ, considered as a man, was subject to the wants, and therefore felt the desires of other human beings. In the second, considered as an atonement for sin, he bore the afflictions and infirmities, the sorrows and the anguish, incidental to a fallen and imperfect race. The consideration of these two things will shew us how he was tempted. The wants

that he had he was naturally desirous of satisfying, and therefore when the means of doing so lawfully and righteously were not at hand, he was open to a temptation to satisfy them unlawfully and unrighteously. In the same way the prospect of suffering, acting upon his fears, would inspire him with a wish to avoid it; and thus, if duty and obedience required that the trial should be sustained, a temptation to the neglect of duty and obedience might again arise. Here we have a short statement of how Christ was liable to temptation; he could not be tempted by unholy desires generated within himself, for he was pure and spotless in the inner chambers of his heart, but, from the weakness and infirmity to which he was born heir, he was liable to be placed in situations where, as far as his human feelings went, he might be, and was, tempted by the watchful fiend to disobey God, and fall as he himself had fallen.—Satan, where he finds that he can claim no fellowship, where he meets with no thought or feeling in unison with his own, has subtlety sufficient to make those which are in themselves blameless, and, in order to

blind us the more, sometimes those that are praiseworthy, in some degree subservient to his designs. Thus, that desire of knowledge, which belonged to our first parents, as beings high and exalted in the scale of creation, became in his hands the means to them of ruin which, but for God's mercy, must have been without redemption. And thus with Jesus Christ, the pangs of hunger excited by a rigorous abstinence of forty days, the very dependence which he expressed and felt, in the goodness and support of his Eternal Father, the noble ambition that dwelt within him, of seeing "all things put hereafter under his feet," when he had won the victory as God ordained it to be won, would, had Satan prevailed, have caused him to shew distrust in God, or to tempt God, or to worship him who was himself to be led captive with all the dark and evil power and mightiness of his kingdom.

Of our Saviour's temptation by Satan we have in Scripture a full and explicit account, that it was carried on against the "second Adam," openly, by a personal communica-

tion, in the same way as against the first. We do not find that he was thus assailed afterwards; but we do find that, though himself without sin, yet having undertaken to become its expiation, he shuddered at the grievous penalty, and was driven by the agony of his spirit to beseech his Father that that cup might pass from him. Herein he was tempted; human infirmity bade him leave the bitter draught untasted, and the human race unredeemed; he had the power to dash it from him, and the anticipation of a weight of woe, and sin, and shame, greater than could be apprehended by mere human sensibility, prompted him to do so. Eternal God! in that dark hour where wert thou? In that dark hour, when the weight of ten thousand thousand sins was all upon his head, and he trembled with dismay at the awful responsibility thus cast upon him? He might have risen from this earth, its iniquity and pollution: he might have renounced the contest with the king of terrors, secure that his power could not reach him in his high and holy place; but then what would have become

of that race for whom he was to contend with the princes of the grave, whose sacrifice and expiation he had taken upon himself to be? Fast held in the grasp of that death, the last enemy that shall be subdued when Christ shall have put all things under his feet, bound inextricably in the chains of that captivity which it was his exalted privilege to lead captive, they must have wailed everlastingly as outcasts, instead of joining in the Redeemer's song of victory. This at best must have been their lot, had temptation done its work. But thou, O God, wert with our "second Adam," and in that hour didst sustain his sinking spirit! Thou didst set before him the joy that awaited him when the agony should be past, and the valley of the shadow of death left behind, and the fervent ejaculation of sincere and stedfast faith, "*Not as I will, but as Thou wilt*," pledged the constancy of our deliverer, and the unfailing redemption of mankind.

And is then salvation *unfailingly* extended to all mankind? Is our deliverer only to be tried, while we, the delivered, are to walk untempted and untried, unassailed by

adversaries strong and mighty, unproved by the fierce ordeal? It cannot be. Both reason and experience establish the contrary; both shew that the benefits of redemption are not to be obtained without a struggle; but that if we wish to be partakers with Christ of the unspeakable joy which was set before him, we must also do battle for the faith, and tread the same hazardous paths of temptation, with the same firm, unfaltering step. I may hazard the assertion, that none will tell me they are not tempted. All who are aware of the difference between right and wrong, are also aware, that the motives to confound them in practice, are often numerous and urgent. No; I am more likely to hear temptation pleaded as an excuse for crime, and as a reason why the creatures of God do not fulfil his word, as in heaven, so in earth. But let such as fancy themselves tempted beyond their strength, who imagine themselves placed in situations where it is more than ordinarily difficult to walk uprightly in the sight of God, and who soothe their fears for the future by a secret and perhaps scarce uttered hope, that their

judge, in awarding their everlasting destiny, will so deal with them, as to dwell more on the temptations that beset them, than the service rendered him here on earth, let such, I beseech them, first consider the history of our Redeemer, the man Jesus Christ, how he was tempted, and how he overcame, and then ask their own consciences, whether they have at all times resisted sin to the uttermost, whether they have not sometimes yielded without a struggle, and whether, when they did begin the contest, it was not carried on rather with a semblance of real resistance, than that earnest desire of victory, which refuses to yield till all resources are exhausted, all strength laid prostrate, and which yields at last, not because the will, but because the power to maintain the warfare is gone by.

It is a common thing to hear men palliate crime, by saying of a person distinguished by violations of God's law on a great scale, *that if he greatly fell, he was greatly tempted.* This, however, is a kind of reasoning which cannot be admitted by those whose duty it is to teach pure scriptural truth. They

cannot allow themselves to soothe the conscience of the trembling sinner, by setting before him the magnitude of the temptations under which he fell, but they feel that, by so doing, they should be urging the arguments of Satan, and sanctioning future crime, as well as excusing past.

It is too a reasoning which, however specious it may be made to appear, and however delightful it may be to those who know not on what other hope to rest, is easily proved to be erroneous.

1. In the first place, if the temptation be one of those incidental to a period of probation, one sent, or permitted by God,* to try his servant as to the stedfastness of his faith, and his fitness for those higher grades of being, to which the human soul may

* It is deducible from our present argument, that it is a part of God's scheme that we should be tempted, as much as that it is the decree of his goodness that we should be supplied with strength to resist successfully the temptations with which we may be assailed. Christ's temptation anticipated our own, and shewed that it was no part of the gospel scheme to free us from its assaults; and as that which is *ordained*, not merely *allowed* by God, to befal his chosen people, cannot but be supposed to be expressly intended for their final advantage, we may again conclude that a certain ordeal of insecurity here, is necessary for their security and stable happiness hereafter.

lawfully aspire, we have the assurance of Scripture, that it cannot be beyond endurance, but that there will, with the temptation, also be made a way to escape. And as if to prove to the utmost the confident assertion of the apostle, the history of Christ's temptations proves, that those which he resisted and overcame were such as are well called great, nay, the greatest to which men can be exposed. There we find the insidious fiend suggesting that to which even the weakest of us are prone; namely, trust in our powers independently of the aid of God. There we find the holy sense of an entire dependence on the fostering care of an Almighty Father, itself made to do the work of temptation. There we find ambition dazzled by the offer of all that dominion, and mightiness, and grandeur, the prospect of which so often leads men to the extremes of possible crime. And there we find the spirit shaken, and the resolution damped, not by a single instance, but by a continued series of vexatious opposition, to be closed by horrors of which he only could be sensible who knew the weight of sin, and felt it cast upon his

head. How can there be temptations greater than these? How can we be tempted more than this? And yet that all this was resisted and overcome, is proved by the privileges which, by the blessing of God, we now enjoy as the ransomed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. In the second place, if the temptation be not sent from God, but encountered voluntarily by ourselves, it will be no excuse for crime, even should it be, in fact, irresistible. When sinners are willing to plead their temptations, they would do well to consider whether they might not have avoided them. Often, when the desire to commit sin first rises in the mind, it is weak and feeble, and could, by a timely application to the author of all our strength, be easily repressed. But if this desire be suffered to grow and increase unopposed, till it take possession of our souls, and assume undoubted sway over all our faculties, who can wonder if he, who refused to resist it in its infancy, falls before it when it has attained to the maturity of its powers? In this case, God cannot be said to be the author of our temptation, or to

wish us to be so tried; nor can we reasonably expect that he will make a way for us to escape from that which it is a violation of his laws to encounter.

I do not say that we need not be tempted; experience shews that we must be daily and hourly; but I do say, that if we pray earnestly to be delivered from temptation, if when we are able we avoid it, if we check its first insidious advances,* the example, as well as the voice of Christ, addresses us in the words of divine encouragement, "My grace is sufficient for

* Prayer is undoubtedly the means by which we obtain strength for opposing temptation successfully, but it is as certain that there is a particular temptation connected with prayer itself, which frequently prompts to omission and contempt of that important duty and privilege. Here it is evident, from the nature of the case, that the needful assistance cannot be obtained by prayer, for where the temptation is against prayer, we cannot pray till the temptation be overcome. How is it then? We must have within ourselves a certain power to resist evil, and the inclination to do it must be capable of being conceived, that is, *we are not totally depraved.* We cannot tell how far the power may extend; the very commencement of resistance may induce God to send his Spirit to our aid, but still it may be begun, and that entirely of, and from ourselves, unless we suppose the aid of the Spirit to be given altogether irrespectively, which is contrary to the idea of man's responsibility, and to the whole tenor of Scripture.

thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."*

Nor do I wish to make the task we have to perform appear an easy one. The strife is indeed, long and arduous, but still it is an assurance exceeding full of comfort, a thought full of immortality, that we, even as our forefathers in the faith, are taught to expect aid proportioned to the difficulty, and therefore final victory and triumph. This it is that cheers the Christian in his warfare—this it is that teaches him to place his trust in God; and this it is that tells him, that if he falls, he falls because he will not, not because he cannot stand. Yes, whatever trials he may look forward to himself, whatever trials he may anticipate for those he loves, he may be assured that there is a strength, not of this world, which is able to bring him and them unharmed out of the fiery ordeal of temptation. He may be apprehensive for himself, and in this, his hour of probation, it is meet that he should be so; or he may be filled with anxious forebodings, as he sends forth some object of affection to steer his

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

bark among the shoals and quicksands of life; but if he has learned Christ himself, and taught him to those committed to his charge, let his hopes in him subdue unreasonable fears; let him rest assured, that the event is in the hands of a merciful God, and that if he has watered the vineyard of the Lord, He will, out of the abundance of his grace, give the increase.

LECTURE VI.

THE USES OF AFFLICTION. CHRIST IS MADE PERFECT BY SUFFERING.

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1 Peter v. 10.

But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Perhaps there is no doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures, less likely to be received with implicit deference and submission, none which it is more difficult to impress vitally and practically on earthly natures, than the necessity of suffering to perfect those who are called to be saints of God. When we hear of the "affliction of the Gospel,"* of being partakers of the

* 2 Tim. i. 8.

"sufferings of Christ,"* though there be no actual rising up of the intellect in rebellion against the pure word, yet there is in the heart either a want of application of the truth, or a feeling of self-congratulation, that hitherto there has been no occasion to apply it. The feelings of the natural man, if not his understanding and experience, are slow to admit the doctrine, that "we must, through much tribulation, enter the kingdom of God."† He had rather win an easier victory, and wear a less resplendent crown; and would willingly lose something of the final reward, if he might but travel towards it along a less rugged path.

To the truth of these observations, I think, the secret convictions of most will bear me witness. If it has at any time pleased God to place them on this rough uneven road, they have found it hard even to be resigned to his dispensations; much more so with the apostle, to be "exceeding joyful,"‡ and "to glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.."§

* 2 Cor. i. 5. † Acts xiv. 22. ‡ 2 Cor. vii. 4.
§ Rom. v. 3.

But if it be true that things are for the most part difficult of attainment in proportion to their value; and again, that the stedfast and cheerful encountering of hardships in the pursuit of any object, proves that object to be of very great value in the eyes of the pursuer, we are able to give an account on the grounds of reason alone, in the first place, why afflictions must be expected in travelling the road towards everlasting bliss, and in the second, how they become available in entitling, if we may so say, the Christian to a higher recompense of reward.

The prize that each one at the close of his Christian pilgrimage hopes to gain, is confessedly beyond all price; something greater than eye hath seen or ear heard, or than it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive; something, in fine, with which all present sufferings cannot in reality be compared; and therefore, he who cheers himself with the hope that it may one day be his own, and sets himself to obtain it, must, from the very nature of the thing he seeks, expect to have to struggle long and painfully. And if this struggle be patiently endured unto the end, if there be no looking

back, no taking the hand from the plough till the work be done, what does it shew but that the vision of faith is bright, that her gaze is directed immovably to the glory to be revealed, and that she is conscious of a strength more than mortal? And what is here manifested by affliction, nay increased and exalted, (for each victory of faith makes her more faithful), but that grace to which the blessings of the skies are pledged?

And if we follow up this reasoning, and find that faith in things unseen and eternal lifts up the mind from things seen and temporal;—and if the very "law in our hearts" tells us *the farther from the world the nearer to God*, how can we do otherwise than conclude, that the man who has been tried by affliction, and endured through faith, is made more meet for his presence, less assimilated to things human, and more to things divine? While if, in addition to this, we reflect how flat and unprofitable worldly sorrow makes the things of the world appear, how readily the affections fly from them when their sting is felt, and with what fondness they dwell upon them while all is externally delightful, we shall

not be at a loss for other reasons why afflictions are necessary to prepare the people of the Lord for a better and more enduring inheritance.

In a state like that in which we at present find ourselves, where all is unstable and uncertain, and where sorrow is waiting upon all our paths, the humble inquirer after righteousness will be content to ask, whether the afflictions to which he finds himself exposed can be turned to any account. And here he will, as in all other questions connected with his Christian life, be fain to turn his eyes to the Captain of his salvation, and learn of him the things belonging to his peace. He looks to Him now; now, when he would know why God's saints are to pass through much tribulation, and he finds in Him a suffering Messiah; one who, though he is hereafter to lead him to the abodes of peace, and within the doors of paradise once lost, did, while on earth, bid him take up a cross which he also bore, and encircle his brow with a crown of thorns whose points had already pierced himself.

In searching for the causes why all this

weight of woe was heaped upon one so meek, so humble, and so good, he finds from the records of holy writ, that, as regarded himself, it was that "through sufferings" he might be made "perfect,"* for "though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;"† and also that, having been made perfect unto obedience, he might "for the suffering of death" be crowned with glory,‡ and becoming "obedient to the death of the cross" be "highly exalted" by God; "having a name given him which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."§ This he finds to be the case with Jesus, and he believes

* Hebrews ii. 10.—I have here said "as regarded himself," because the beneficial effect of his sufferings principally regarded others, namely, those for whom he was the vicarious sacrifice; nay, entirely when we consider that it was for their sakes that he was made perfect.

† Heb. v. 8. ‡ Heb. ii. 7. § Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.

that for the same reason, his merciful Father is sending affliction on his saints on earth, that they may learn more perfect obedience, that they may submit more fully to the decrees of God, that they may be more thoroughly conformed to him in will and affection; and also that such chastisements of love, by making the attainment more difficult, and the trial of faith more convincing, may entitle the Christian to a higher recompense of reward.

It is perhaps difficult to conceive how the Son of God, himself partaking of the perfections of his Father, could be said to have learned obedience, but in this place, as before, we must accustom ourselves to consider Christ's human nature separately from the divine; and while in one sense we regard him as incapable of advancing farther in the scale of excellence, in another we must look upon him as a man, sinless indeed, but yet capable of exhibiting degrees of virtue, and as he drew nearer to the fruition of his reward, subjecting his human affections more and

more to the influence of Deity, and conforming them to that perfection which was to sit on the throne of God for ever.

We have already seen that Christ was open to temptation, and we have no reason to suppose that his successful resistance did not make him, as others, stronger against its future attacks. If it were so, here is one instance in which, as a man, he became gradually more perfect; and he might become so in another by a different trial of his faith; by afflictions, which would prove his trust in God; and by teaching him that in the flesh there was weakness, shew how it was necessary it should be obedient to Him who alone could keep it from falling.

* All this is intelligible if we consider that Christ was born a man, and that there is no reason to suppose that the human nature, distinct from the divine, was in him more perfect than when it came first from the hand of the Creator. In this view of the question, the only conclusion that results from the Saviour's imperfection is, that man was not originally created perfect: and this is a conclusion involving no difficulties; we are only carried back to the uses of "a state of probation as intended for moral discipline and improvement," a state in which Adam was undoubtedly placed, and in which therefore Christ may also be supposed to have been placed, and that for the same end.

My brethren, if Christ, by suffering, was made perfect, if by suffering he learned obedience, what prayer would ye rather that I should offer for you to the Father of all mercies, now that in this transitory life the waves of trouble still gather round us, and each one, even if hitherto he has escaped, must expect to buffet with the surge,—what rather than this? "The God of all grace who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Yes; "after ye have suffered a while," for there is a fixed unalterable law, dated from the time when God first looked upon the work of his hands, and could not pronounce that it was good, that man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. And if it be that ye are called unto glory, if it be that, in the hands of God, this suffering shall make you perfect, and ye shall come forth from it like gold tried seven times in the fire, and if, for the elect's sake, these days be shortened, so that they be but for awhile, shall we shrink from mentioning them in our prayer? Or rather,

shall not the Christian, when he sees the clouds that lower around him, rejoice that he may look forward to the time when out of darkness shall break forth light, and when his short-lived sorrow shall be turned into everlasting joy; when he shall be made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled?

If we saw you floating down the full tide of prosperity, your religion lulled to rest by inaction, your faith never put to the test, your patience never tried, your trust in God never proved, we should almost wish that affliction might be sent to light up the spark of piety into a flame, to loosen the hold the affections will naturally take on this world's goods, to make you sensible of the value of things spiritual, and therefore more eager for them. We should still say in our appeals to the Most High God, when we invoked your everlasting welfare, "*after ye have suffered awhile*," as knowing that, as he has ordained, you can under no other dispensation, be made perfect or receive assurance of reward.

I do not say, that if you are suffering for sin, I would have you rejoice. Nay, mercy

forbid that crime should rouse the God of vengeance to lay bare his arm! And yet, when we daily see his Majesty insulted, his laws violated, his sabbaths profaned, his ordinances ridiculed, and his name blasphemed, what would be the wonder if he should hasten and no longer tarry? It would be no wonder, if the afflictions sent upon a people whom he has chosen should be no longer chastisements of love, but chastisements of wrath: and if that be the case, surely we shall find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Then there may be no joy, no lively hope, but a bowing before the stroke with horror-stricken awe and apprehension, "men's hearts failing them for fear," and "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."*

I have made these observations in passing, not to make you suppose that it is God's general wont thus to deal with his people, for then I could not speak of afflictions as I am now doing; and in fact, his

* Heb. iv. 15.

strokes are oftener sent in mercy than in judgment, but that you may look to your ways in time, and by humbling yourselves before the Lord, escape the portion of his unreconciled foes. For this reason, I suggest that it may be, as it has been, that God will set himself against those who might have been His people, with a countenance that knows no love, as against such as cannot be saved. But I would not have any one inclined to suppose that it is so with himself, that he is marked out individually as the object of divine vengeance. This would be to excite despair, not hope. It would be to bid him, like righteous Job's insidious tempters, *curse God and die*, and would be but a mockery of the merciful religion of Christ. If in our afflictions we do but acknowledge the finger of God; if we do but own, that for our sins he is justly displeased, there is not yet room for the fearful curse of judicial blindness; there is yet hope that worldly sorrow may produce heavenly happiness, and that God has shewn his terrors to prevent future sin, and thus put a stop to the progress of destruction. It is where the heart is hardened,

where there is no recognition of the hand of a Supreme Ruler of all events, or none till it is seen, as by the impious Belshazzar, finishing its work by inscribing, as it were, on the very walls, for then all things speak, the sentence *thou hast been weighed, and art found wanting*, that we must behold in misery here, the beginning of penal torments, and the foretaste of an everlasting hell. If we would turn affliction to its proper account, the first thing to do is to recognize the source from whence it comes, to refer it to God. But this will not be enough, if we do not submit to it with resignation. There must be no repining, no complaint of unjust usage. When we have opened our eyes to see God, and our ears to hear his voice, we must be ready to cry out and confess that all his decrees are just, and all his counsels wise; that all his judgments are good, and his ways full of mercy and loving kindness. And then we shall examine ourselves, and deplore the uncleanness of our hearts: then shall we lift up our eyes from that which is unstable and uncertain, to that which is built on a sure foundation: then shall we know what

it is to learn Christ; then shall we find the lamp of faith burn brighter; then shall we learn how *we have been brought through the fire, and refined as silver is refined, and tried as gold is tried, that we may call on the name of the Lord, and he may hear us.**

How great consolation does our Merciful Father offer to his people! At the time that they most need it, he tells them, that what is painful to them here, is working out for them joy and immortality. It is a consolation that sustained righteous men of old, "of whom the world was not worthy," when they accepted not "deliverance, in hope of a better resurrection:" a consolation that strengthened the saints to fulfil boldly the mission of the Lord, as "reckoning that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed:"†—a consolation that has lighted up the countenances of martyrs with a holy joy,—and a consolation which, by the blessing of our God, still sheds its cheering ray over the abode of sorrow, and speaks peace to the broken hearted, and bids the mourner rejoice.

* Zech. xiii. 9. † Rom. viii. 18.

And do we not see and feel this consolation? Do we not see and feel the uses of affliction? Does not the example of Christ teach them us? That they are sent to draw our affections from the world, and fix them upon God? To try our faith and strengthen it, and thus entitle us to a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory? I know there are some who will not see or feel this, who are obstinately hardened against the doings of the Lord, against whose hearts his arrows fly like lightnings against the everlasting rocks, and on whose affections the beams of his mercies play ineffectual as those of a northern sun on the eternal snows; but they are, I trust, few, too few to be found among those assembled for prayer and praise. Of those who do not adequately understand God's dealings with his people, we are more likely to meet with those among his worshippers, whose earthly impatience of trial will not allow them to perceive what kind of discipline is necessary to be undergone, that the kingdom of heaven may be won; or those who, from having hitherto had little experience of ill, are not sufficiently

aware how greatly they are dependent upon God; how little of real good this world has to give, and how much its transitory nature deducts from the value of that it is able to offer to its votaries. The first of these I would exhort not to entertain such unworthy ideas of God, as to suppose that he afflicts them unnecessarily or wantonly, and assure them that, if it is not their own fault, they will one day rejoice that they are now sorrowful. To the others I would say, that it will be good for them if they be afflicted; if the brightness of this world be sullied in the chase after things heavenly. If judgment comes from God to arouse them, may they bow submissive to the stroke, and thankfully recognize the hand of a Merciful Father.

This is not a subject in which we have no interest. It is of paramount, of vital importance to us all, that we should so bear our inevitable sorrows here, as that they may give birth to spiritual blessings, and that after we *have suffered awhile*, after we have endured our burdens here some few short years, and the agony and the toil are past, we may be made perfect by

the grace of God, stablished on the rock of our salvation, strengthened in the purified and sanctified spirit, and settled in heavenly rest. Thus let us entreat God to deal with us, and thank him with exceeding hope, that in Christ Jesus, He has given us a Saviour who is able to bring strength out of weakness, joy out of sorrow, and out of the night and darkness of time, the light and glory of eternity.

LECTURE VII.

COMMUNICATION WITH GOD IN PRAYER. CHRIST PRAYETH.

PSALM LXV. 2.

O Thou that hearest prayer.

WHEN the penitent is on his knees before his infallible Lord and Judge, entreating pardon and acceptance in that great name through which alone he trusts salvation may be gained: when the child of sorrow is prostrate before the throne of his Everlasting Father, pouring out the anguish of his soul into His ears, who he believes listens with compassion to the mournful voice of his calling, and is ready to shed abroad upon his heart the consolations of a comforting, reviving, renewing spirit: when

the creature prefers his supplication to his Creator, that He will provide for his daily wants, and defend him from daily harm; what reason has any one of them for confidence, that the great Self-Existent God, whom he neither sees nor hears, will distinguish his feeble cry among the ten thousand thousand voices which, in this peopled world, are lifted up on every side? That there must be some ground of confidence we may well believe, for why should so many useless tears be shed, so many sighs be uttered in vain, so many petitions unavailingly preferred? If prayer were hopeless, surely it would soon be silent. If prayer were hopeless, the temples of the Lord would soon be voiceless as He himself is viewless. The fury of His wrath must be borne, not deprecated; the fountains of sorrow must be choked up, not suffered to flow at his feet; and the earth-born must be taught dependence on himself, not on the spiritual arm which he may no longer deem stretched out to protect him.

But to save us from so deep despair we have, in the first place, as men, the records of by-gone ages, the history of the world

itself, to attest that there is in the heart an indwelling consciousness, the development of which it is scarcely possible that circumstances should repress; which, with the existence of a Deity, teaches also that He is a being who interests himself in the prayers of men. Wherever God has been known, there he has been worshipped. Wherever he has been worshipped, he has been believed to listen to his worshipper. The page of history, the ruins of temples, the remnants of altars, the groves of idolatry, the pomps and extravagances of heathenism, unite in declaring the unanimous conviction of the heart and understanding, that God, however creeds may vary as to His nature and attributes, is a God that heareth prayer.

And if, in the second place, we advert to the more interesting memorials of revelation, both the Jew and the Christian will find in them abundant assurance of the same important truth. Each will find there records, not only of prayer preferred, but also of prayer answered.

Under the first and less perfect dispensation, full directions are given how to

worship God rightly, with a direct promise that their observance shall be followed by His favour; and each pious servant of the Lord is represented as one who "*called upon His name.*" It is, however, under the Christian dispensation, that we must look for prayer in its purity, and view it, in its full force and efficacy, as the appointed communication between God and his creatures. It is true that there are to be found in the pages of the *Old* Testament, many instances where the prayer of the righteous man has been the means of direct intercourse with the Most High, as in the case of Manoah in the book of Judges,* in that of Elijah in his contest with the prophets of Baal, when God aided him visibly by fire consuming the sacrifice,† in that of Elisha when he raised the Shunamite's son,‡ and in that of Hezekiah, when he obtained an addition of fifteen years to his life;§ but these, and such as these, we must count amongst the number of those "prophets and righteous men"‖ who desired to see and hear the things which in these latter

* Judges xiii. 9. † 1 Kings xvii. 21. ‡ 2 Kings iv. 33.
§ 2 Kings xx. 5, 6. ‖ Matt. xiii. 17.

days have been revealed, who "had seen the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them and confessed them, and embraced them,* and were thus in some degree partakers of Christianity. In a general way, the people of Israel were taught that they must offer their supplications by the ministration of a priest, that they must be borne up on the smoke of incense at the morning and evening sacrifice; and thus St. Luke tells us that, while Zacharias went up into the temple to burn incense, "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense."†

According to this usage we find in the vision of the revelations,‡ that "an angel came and stood at the altar having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it, with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." The angel here mentioned is the angel of the new covenant, Christ our Lord, who intercedes

* Heb. xi. 13. † Luke i. 10. ‡ Rev. viii. 3.

for us with our God, and as our Mediator constantly offers up our prayers unto Him. Christ, our true priest and most powerful intercessor, by virtue of that one sacrifice of himself once offered for all, being entered into the holy place, the heaven above, is there continually present before the throne of mercy, to be a constant intercessor for us unto our God, and while we are here in the outer court of his church in this world, offering up our prayers unto our God, he there presents them unto Him for us, and through his hands they are accepted as a sweet-smelling savour in his presence.* This it is that imparts its worth and glory to the Christian's prayer, and exalts it so far above that of even the most faithful Israelite. It requires no human agency to cause it to reach the ears of Deity with acceptance, because it is commended to notice by the prevailing voice of God's own Son; it floats not on the smoke of earth-built altars, because it rises from the golden censer of Christ's own sufferings; it needs to observe no stated times and seasons, no morning and evening sacrifice, but at every

* Prideaux's Connexions, vol. ii. 178.

hour and in every place, at noon or at night, in the gorgeous temple or in the lowly hut, on the mountain or on the deep, is uttered, and listened to by God, because our great Intercessor is ever before the throne, and ever claims to be heard in right of his meritorious obedience. This prayer has been said to be "the spiritual sacrifice which supersedes the sacrifice of the old covenant;"* it is the sacrifice which, instead of the blood of bulls and of goats, it is ours to lay upon the altar of the living God; it is that which He demands as our reasonable tribute, and which it is our highest privilege to offer, as drawing down innumerable blessings from above.

Such is the lesson that the gospel revelation teaches, and would to God that more of those who live under its light would suffer themselves to be guided by its precepts; that there was more lifting up of

* Tertullian. "The passage shews us what God does not require, what he does require the Gospel teaches us. *The time cometh when the true worshippers shall worship God in spirit and in truth, for God is a Spirit.* We are the true worshippers, and the true priests, we who pray to him in spirit, and offer up to him the sacrifice suited to his Divine Being, and well-pleasing to him,—that which he requires."—*Neander.*

the heart, a greater inclination to go to God for all we want or wish, a more eager desire to enjoy communion with him. The blessings of redemption are great, and it would be a horrible thought to any one that he had forfeited all interest in them; he could not, without the most aggravated feelings of terrible despair, imagine himself doomed eternally to the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched, and yet perhaps he does not now even pray to be delivered from them. And can then redemption be obtained without prayer? Ask the first of the redeemed, the great Redeemer himself. We are told that "in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, he was heard in that he feared."* Weighed down by imputed sin, the Saviour, as man, could not save himself, and he that could, did not stretch forth his arm to aid him till he had besought him with strong crying and tears and reverential fear. In the strong agony in the garden Jesus Christ shuddered at the

* Heb. v. 7.

prospect of death, not the death of the body, for that, with all its extremes of shame and torture, has been endured heroically, nay joyfully, by many a martyred saint; but that death which belongs to him who is under the curse, the death of perpetual exclusion from the presence of God, of the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. This it was at which his soul shuddered; for he had taken the curse upon himself, and, unless it were removed, his human soul, on its separation from its mortal tabernacle, could not accompany the divine essence with which it had been united into its heavenly glories, the consummation he had been taught to look forward to as the reward of his great sacrifice, first for himself, and afterwards for all mankind. He was allowed to fear that this curse might be perpetual, both as part of the bitter cup which he was ordained to exhaust to the very dregs, and also that we might learn of him how to gain access to God, and make our own, as he did, the benefits of his appointed redemption.

That, which the Christ thought it necessary to entreat of God with strong crying

and tears, shall we obtain without any fear or apprehension? Shall it be a bold and easy confidence throughout, unacquainted with awe-stricken humiliation, earnest supplication, or even one heartfelt prayer directed to the throne of grace? And if not, why this silence, why these motionless lips, why this mocking of the sanctuary?—But perhaps redemption is a thing, the consequences of which are too far removed to allow them to affect us much at present, and we shall seek its benefits when the time comes that we shall be likely soon to require them; but we cannot invest death with such terrors, now that he is so distant, as to fly for succour against him at present. It will be trite and useless to remind such reasoners that he may now be even at the door, and that the hour may never come, when it may be said of them, as once of the chosen and enlightened Pharisee, "behold he prayeth."* A hundred examples may teach him this daily, a hundred examples where death comes to either the reckless or the confounded, to men unmoved by fear, or struck down by it sud-

* Acts ix. 11.

denly into a despair without hope and without prayer; and if these cannot move them, where is the eloquent tongue that can?

But has then prayer no advantages here? If we will not carry our views beyond the grave, is there no peace which may be called down upon us in this world? Are we so fulfilled with the plenteousness of mercies as to need nothing at the hand of Omnipotence? If it be so, how can we reconcile it to our consciences that, even if we do not pray to him, we ever cease to bless and praise Him for that we have? But the heart knows well that, in these days of its earthly pilgrimage, there is many a want unsatisfied, many an anxious craving, many a depressing sorrow. Jesus Christ found it so, and he betook himself to God; the solitary mountain, and the hours of darkness witnessed his communings,* and on the faith of his own acceptance he assures us that "whatsoever we shall ask in prayer believing that shall we receive."† And is there nothing

* Luke vi. 12. † Matt. xxi. 22.

wanted, is not peace wanted, is not comfort and consolation wanted? Then, when the weight of sorrow is dead upon the heart, when reflection is bitter, when the aspect of the world is chill, when the clay-cold relics of friends speak to us of a common mortality but a desolation which is all our own, why do we not go to God? Why do we not ask *Him* to implant in our hearts thoughts on which we may dwell with pleasure, to shew us some light on which we may fix our eyes rather than on our adversities, to soothe the unutterable pang of parting here by the hope of meeting hereafter, and make our solitude cheerful by his presence? Haply, if we do this we shall be induced to look to something which is beyond. The very experience of those who have viewed life as it is, will teach them what they must expect here; and when they have known the blessings of religion, and can compare them with this, surely they will be roused to seek to make them lasting. And then, how many things will be wanted! Repentance will be wanted, grace will be wanted,

deliverance from, and strength against, temptation,* faith and hope. And all this we must ask in prayer, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."† That which we do not ask we cannot have, God recognizes no desire where he hears no prayer; but when the heart is subdued to this, he is ready to prepare the soul for his own eternity.

It would seem by this that it is a good thing to be led to pray even for *peace in this world*, inasmuch as it may lead us to think upon God, and appreciate Him; and so it is; but not so if, in the first instance, our views are *entirely* confined to this world, if the prayer is made only as our last resort, and because we know not how else to escape from the weight which

* Origen says, "He that confides in prayer has often vanquished even the power of plausible reasons, which were sufficient to terrify even those who were counted believers. How often do those who have fallen into temptations, hard to be overcome, suffer no shame from them, and come forth from them unhurt, without even being touched with the smell of the fire that was kindled against them."

† Phil. iv. 6.

oppresses us. The benefit asked may be earthly, but not so the thoughts; we may not call in God, as we would some human aid, to remain with us while the difficulty lasts, and then to be dismissed till his services are again required. Prayer thus preferred will not be answered, and is therefore ineffectual, nor if it were, would it be likely to be of spiritual benefit to the worshipper. A certain frame of mind is necessary to be found in the petitioner, and this is such a one as implies that he is at least standing on the threshold of religion, though his first prayer be for a relief from temporal, instead of, as it ought to be, from eternal evil. "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed,"* asks St. Paul; and belief implies, not only a knowledge of God and of his power to aid them, but a conviction that he alone can do it, that whatever may befall them is by his decree, and that his counsels are wise and good, even though they may have told to their own apparent disadvantage. Jesus Christ "was heard in that he feared," he

* Rom. x. 14.

had a reverential fear of God as the Ordainer of his sufferings, and the wise Controller of his fate, and was ready to submit to his will as King and Lord of all things, even though it should lead him through agony and shame; for this reason he was heard, and so shall all be heard who ask with the same fear, who approach God, not as a being whose services they can command, but with reverential awe, not with complaint, but with humble submission, and a willingness to abide all patiently which may seem good and fitting unto Him.

And when they are heard, when the spirit has found its way to the God and Father of Spirits, who shall describe the blessed effects? First comes the peace of God, soothing anguish, and imparting its own peculiar joys; then the seeking and finding, the asking and having, of all the distinguishing blessings and privileges of the gospel; and lastly, the establishment of that communion with God, which is the foretaste of immediate intercourse with Him hereafter. By prayer the justified soul converses with God, and regains in part

the unutterable bliss of that society which our first parents enjoyed face to face with him in the sinless groves of Paradise. This is man's highest privilege in this lower world; it is this that makes the true Christian look forward to the day of prayer, and the hour of prayer, as to an oasis in the desert—a green spot in the dreary waste of life; it is now that the bonds of sin are broken, and its power no longer felt; it is now that sin, and Satan, and death, and the grave, are set at nought, and that the soul surveys her own glorious inheritance with the delight of anticipated enjoyment. And besides, God expects this converse with himself, and requires it as part of holiness. He looks for it as the proof of faith, He demands it as an acknowledgment of submission and dependence, He exacts it as the price of his favours, and desires it as an earnest of our wish to dwell for ever with himself. It is thus indeed he ever deals with us, He makes that our duty which is in itself most calculated to make us happy; but, if one duty may be preferred before another, it is more particularly so in the case of prayer, for that not only prepares

us for the promises, but grasps heaven itself, and sets us at once, in the flesh, in the presence of Him that sitteth on the throne.

And where then are our prayers? Where is the sweet communion with the "God of the spirits of all flesh?" Where the converse with the Creator, which could satisfy all our wants, and keep us from falling, for there is a strength in prayer, and we cannot sin while in communion with God? Is it to be found within our houses, within the secret chamber? Do we there, like the holy Daniel, "kneel upon our knees three times a day, and pray and give thanks before our God."* Alas! how many even lay their heads each night upon their pillows, without so much as commending themselves to His protection, much less preparing themselves, by communion, for that eternal sleep which may overtake them before the morning light.—If we do pray then and there, is it habitual, is it with the spirit as well as with the lips, and is it with fear? If we pray only when under the pressure of some want, if it is only done as

* Daniel vi. 10.

a mere form, and if not with due reverence and humility, it cannot be received by God as the acceptable sacrifice of our reasonable service; and yet I fear the consciences of too many will tell them, that in this matter they are lamentably guilty, that often when on their knees they are not conscious in whose presence they are, or only so when their own weakness, felt and experienced, drives them perforce to God.—Shall we find prayer and real communion with God within the sanctuary? There, if any where, the feelings will be roused to it. There God has promised to dwell; we are aware that the place itself in which we are, is set apart for his worship, and the records of mortality on every side speak of human frailty and human nothingness. Doubtless there are those, and may God add to them daily, who enter with thankfulness and devotion, and rejoice that they are permitted to partake of its solemn and soul-inspiring services; but yet how many are there who leave it as they came, without one lifting up of the heart, either in prayer, in praise, or in thanksgiving.

I know that there are many who frequent

the house of the Lord to have their ears charmed by human eloquence, or their tastes gratified by the setting forth of their favourite doctrines, and that where they cannot have either one or the other, they turn their backs upon its doors; but the Lord himself hath said, "my house shall be called the house of prayer," not the house of eloquence, or the house of doctrine, and there the true Christian will ever pray, under whatever ministration it may be; nor when he comes there, will he think that he does enough if he plays the part of a listener, but with the deep conviction, that ten thousand sermons, however excellent, can do nothing for his final salvation, unless they lead him to prayer; he will pour out his heart to his God in the sanctuary, and in the secret chamber.

There is too much negligence in this matter, as there is in every other relating to religion, but it is more flagrant with regard to prayer, other ordinances are more attended to. Some men who are seen with worshippers never pray, they never think of it, not even the judgments of God will rouse them to it, when they witness them

in their most awful forms, like those that "came together to see Jesus die, they *smite their breasts and return;** but there is no enlightening of the understanding, no sending of the soul to God. It is a fearful infatuation: for I am obliged to declare on the authority of Scripture, on the authority of the example of Christ himself, and with my dying voice I must maintain the same, that there is no other way by which gospel truth can act effectually on our hearts, by which we can obtain the favour of God, or escape final perdition. We cannot plead as an excuse for neglect, that we know not how to pray, for Christ himself has taught us; our heavenly Father, too, looks not for perfectness of expression; and where there is indeed ignorance of how to address him, he will mercifully accept the wish to do it, he will inform the penitent with the influences of His Holy Spirit, and the dews of divine grace shall descend upon his heart.

* Luke xxiii. 48.

LECTURE VIII.

THE DEATH OF THE BODY.—CHRIST DIETH.

ROMANS VI. 3.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death.

WHATEVER this world can claim of pleasure and enjoyment, whatever it may boast of excellence and virtue, along with all that it contains of misery and vice, is hurried on towards one final consummation. Men sink into the tomb, and their sorrows and their joys, their vicious inclinations and their principles of virtue, alike die with them. Now there arises in the mind a certain awe and apprehension, a certain dread, an indescribable fear, whenever we look forward to that end of all things. Not even the most miserable are exempt from

it; however intolerable their lot they still do, in their secret hearts, prefer enduring it to casting off the burden by death. Every symptom of decay, and of a tendency to dissolution, gives birth to gloomy forebodings, nor do we willingly, nor, while our hopes whisper to us that it is far off, without an effort, contemplate the solemn hour when the damps of corruption shall gather on the brow, and thought and feeling give place to insensibility, at least of earthly joy or sorrow.

This fear of death, as well as this death itself, is a part of the original curse from which redemption does not relieve us. It is the fruit of the remaining corruption of sin that the bodies, even of the redeemed, may not be created immortal; and it is a punishment of sin, not yet removed, that the Christian should look on the death of the body as a penalty to be paid to the justice of God, and view its approach with proportionate apprehension.

Still, however, the scene is not altogether dark to him, nor is the anxiety with which the soul looks forward to the breaking up of its tabernacle of flesh, and its own en-

trance on the yet unvisited regions of spiritual existence, unmixed with the gladdening hope that the change may be a blessed one, and itself productive of exceeding great and important benefits.

The gospel we are able to declare is, not only a gospel to guide us through life, but is also, if we may so say, a gospel in death; that is, it reconciles us to it, and while the accents of wrath tell us that the body *must* die, tells us in the accents of mercy, that it is *good for us* it should. Its light finds its way into the blackness of the grave, and sheds its ray over the mouldering heaps of the charnel-house, while it reveals to us, that it is better for the spirit whose habitation they once formed, that they should be as they are. Such is the difference between a revelation of wrath and a revelation of mercy; a revelation of wrath denounces death as the punishment due for sin done in the body, and a preparation for the further punishment of the soul that sinned; a revelation of mercy does not entirely divest it of the character of a penalty, but, with reference to the redeemed soul, says that it is that which is sanctified leaving

that which is unholy, that which is accepted leaving that which is condemned.

The fact is, that the effect of sin upon our mortal natures has been, from first to last, to make the body impure and corrupt. Nor can it be otherwise—the spirit of God enters into the *heart* and enlightens it with saving truth, and sanctifies it with celestial virtues; but the flesh and its desires, though oftentimes partially subdued by the strengthened spirit, still remain the same: they are ever ready to rise up and contend, and that with such vigour and success, that the very chiefest of the saints of God was constrained to confess, that *while with the mind he himself served the law of God, with the flesh he served the law of sin;* for "I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."* It is this captivity from which the soul by death escapes, and from which it could not before or by any other means. When it bids adieu to its tenement of flesh, it bids adieu also to carnal desires, and allows the indwelling Spirit of God un-

* Rom. vii. 23.

limited scope to mould its thoughts and affections as it will. Thus, and here comes our proof, when Christ died, "he died unto sin."* When for our salvation he took upon him a mortal nature, he took one which, though not innately corrupt, was oppressed by the weight of the curse, just as if it were; one which, though not itself guilty, was esteemed so; and, as an atonement for others, liable to all the consequences of sin, except the depravity which is entailed only on the actual workers of iniquity. He was liable to an oppressive sense of infirmity and weakness, to strong and fierce temptations, and last of all, to the dissolution, in agony and pain, of that body with which he had voluntarily clothed the divine essence, accompanied too by that which is emphatically styled the "sting of death," the sense of suffering for sin, the dread that on account of sin imputed to him, and cast upon his head, the countenance of God his Father was averted from him in displeasure, causing him to give utterance to the piercing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

* Rom. vi. 10.

But then all was done—when the dismayed soul had winged its flight from the tortured body, the strife and conflict were for ever past. Satan could use no more his weapons of infernal malice; sin with its terrors could assail no longer; "death had no more dominion," and he passed through its dark and fearful valley to unite a human nature for ever with God in heaven. And this it is which lifts up a voice, "the sound of which has gone out into all lands," which robs the grave of its victory and death of its sting, and bids the Christian, longing for God, and the law of God, and unfettered obedience to the will of God, even rejoice that he is to die, as knowing that he dieth with Christ, and thus dieth unto sin.

But whence, we may ask, is all this? Whence is it that death is thus changed, that it has been thus divested of its terrors? As the curse and the law stand, death is the appointed punishment of sin, the deepest and deadliest penalty that could be devised by an offended God against a disobedient and rebellious race, and whence is it that one, born after the same image, sprung

from the same seed, and if himself blameless as regarded the law, yet counted guilty by imputed sin, was able, not only to meet it without any of the dreadful consequences anticipated, but also, as it were, to pass through its portals into a state of complete security and exquisite enjoyment, and besides leave an assurance to all others, that the dissolution of the body may in like manner be to them the passport to heaven? The story is wonderful how God, the Son of God, took upon him man's nature, and, with it, the consequence of every sin, every act of disobedience throughout the world, of those who were willing to cast their burden upon him; with it, all that was due from the beginning, and will be to the end of time, to the justice of a righteous Lord. The story is wonderful, how for that sin and disobedience, and to satisfy that debt, the man on whom it fell died, died as sinners die, the soul not parting from its tabernacle till it had experienced the terrible apprehension that it was forsaken by God, and like Noah's dove should find no rest.—The story is wonderful, how the Deity with which it was united, redeemed

that soul, pronouncing that the penalty was paid in full, and justice for ever satisfied; that the death through which it had passed was a death unto sin, a death to its assaults, its claims, and its exactions, and therefore neither itself nor its terrible consequences, had any more dominion, but were cast off for ever and ever. All this is wonderful, mysterious, inexplicable; not contrary to reason, but above it; but yet the great essential fact remains, that Jesus Christ was, by the power of his Godhead, able in his death to offer an acceptable atonement for all sin, so that we are, if we avail ourselves of our privilege, relieved from the power of the curse, and that, if we are made "partakers with Christ in his death," the dissolution of the corporeal frame which still awaits us, though redeemed, will, as with him, be the means of placing the soul beyond the influence of sin, secure from all the doubts and misgivings entailed upon those who are even partially subject to it, and re-instated in the sphere it was at first destined to fill in God's glorious and perfect creation.

This is the joyful fact. But oh! how great has been the sacrifice! How incalcu-

lable the price it has cost to work out for us the assurance, that death is not now God's curse. Well might the Psalmist exclaim, "No man may deliver his brother, nor make agreement unto God for him, for it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever."* It cost all that God could give. But again, how incalculably great is the benefit imparted! Resting on this assurance, it is that the Spirit saith, "*Henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours;*"†—they rest from their struggles with the enemy of their salvation, they rest from their hitherto ceaseless contest with sin. This it is that gives utterance to the confident anticipation, that all beyond the grave is not the dominion of the powers of darkness. This it is that causes the faithful Christian to look forward with a satisfied spirit to the tomb as the goal of his earthly pilgrimage, and the point where, throwing off all incumbrances, he shall commence his heavenly course, straight and unhindered, to the throne of the everlasting God.

* Psalm xlix. 7. † Rev. xiv. 13.

Then what so terrible in death? Methinks the eye of faith might behold the Saviour on the cross, bowing his head and giving up the ghost, while the ejaculation, "It is finished," shews that he was aware of the accomplishment of his labours, that the grave was about to be opened to be closed no more, and the fetters which sin had imposed for ever loosened. What tears then shall we shed round the bed of the dying Christian? If we weep it is for ourselves, not for him who dieth with Christ. It is true there is the blanched cheek, the glazed eye, the quivering lip, the convulsed frame, the expiring sigh, and then the icy coldness of mortality, and then—the banquet of the worm; but all this is the overthrow of the tenement of sin, the casting off of the slough of corruption. Yes, true and faithful believer, with thee, as with him who conquered death, "it is finished!" Not all the circumstances of horror that can be gathered around thy "great and awful change," can deprive thee of this, thou diest no more, death hath no more dominion over thee.

"Thanks be to God who giveth us the

victory through our Lord Jesus Christ,"* and thanks be rendered to him evermore, that he hath revealed unto us so abounding a gospel of consolation; a consolation which remains with us through life, nor deserts us at the last dark hour of need. More favoured we in this than the mother of Jesus herself. When she stood afar off to behold the scene on Calvary, still cherishing a vague hope that her son might yet shew himself as the mighty God she had been taught to look for in the Messiah, how must her heart have sunk within her, as the heartless work proceeded without even resistance on his part! The cross, the nails, the cruel mockings, the vinegar and gall, all were suffered, and then the "Eli, Eli," broke upon her ear, and Jesus died. Her watch had proved a hopeless one.—That she was resigned to the will of the eternal God we may not doubt, but she knew not to what the cross was a passport; she saw death, and she knew not to what it led. But it is not so with us. Whenever one of the flock of Christ is called away, we know why he is taken; there is nothing

* 1 Cor. xv. 57.

hopeless about it, but to the departed soul something exceeding joyful; and we are able to return God thanks that it has pleased him to deliver our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world; thus soothing present sorrow, and laying up for ourselves comfort, and hope, and strength, against the hour when we ourselves shall be summoned to put off this mortal clay, and follow those who have gone before us to the world of ransomed spirits.

But am I not going too far to be practically useful, am I not speaking of hopes we cannot apply, of consolations we cannot reach? Not if the word of God, and the example of our great Redeemer can supply a foundation for effectual hope and consolation. If any cannot find them, the fault is in himself, not in Jehovah, not in the Saviour of the world. With him is fulness of joy for evermore, and its rays will find their way to this dark earth, and shed themselves on the believer's heart, and if ours are not enlightened, the fault is that we are not believers.

If we would, at the end of our mortal course, go down into the grave with the

strong assurance, that it will be to us what it was to Christ, we must at its beginning enlist ourselves as his; we must enlist ourselves to die with him, and even then be "baptized into his death." Yes, even while the body liveth, the "old man" that was subject to sin must die, it must be "crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we may not serve sin." The carnal mind, which served sin, must be dead, and laid in the tomb which the gospel has provided for it, that it may be freed from its ignominious service, and casting off the old man, rise up into newness of spiritual life, and thus be "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And all this is so evidently according to reason, that it hardly requires revelation to assure us of it. If, when the period it has been allowed to prepare itself is past, the soul goes forth from the body, carnal, corrupt, and unspiritualized, it can gain nothing by the change. Corrupt it is in itself, and must remain so. Though out of its vessel of uncleanness, itself unclean it acquires no fitness for the presence of God by entering the world of spirits, but

naturally consorts with those others of the same sort who are in open rebellion against him, because they may not, cannot be with him, whose portion is the blackness of darkness for ever. If, therefore, the soul would gain anything by death, and if it does not, the horrors of the change are unquestionable, it must itself first be "dead unto sin," and thus "freed" from it. The flesh, with its affections and lusts, may "hinder" it, may "war against" it, may surround it with incentives to vice; it may not be able to shake off altogether the law of the members, but it must not be consenting unto them, it must die with Christ unto its own sin, it must loathe the bondage it is under, it must be pure, it must be spiritualized; and then the way before it is plain, the death of the body will be its complete emancipation, it will be the destruction of its greatest and most dangerous enemy, of all that hindered its approach to God.

It is the want of these affections, freed from sin, it is the want of this crucified spirit, that prevents men finding consolation in the Lord where consolation is most

wanted, where one time or another it must be called for. When others depart, it is but cold comfort to the corrupt unspiritualized heart, conscious that it has itself no such hope on which to rest, to say that "the dead hath died in the Lord:" and when his own "last bed of languishing" is made, when his own time is come, how, even if it were true, could it console the sufferer in the dark hour of apprehension and mortal dread, to suggest that he was dying to that which in life he most loved, and on which all his affections were irrecoverably fixed? But he will not die to sin, he will live to it; not to its fair outside, but to its internal loathsomeness; not to its beauty, but to its corruption; not to its fruit, but to its sting. Yes, so it is throughout; we cannot give religious comfort to those that are not of God. Without holiness, real spiritual holiness, and sanctification of the affections, the gospel is as nothing to us. Every principle it inculcates, if acted upon, leads to it; every doctrine it teaches, if followed up, enforces its necessity; its ordinances are enjoined for the benefit of those who practise it,

and every consolation it offers presupposes it. Each one who is baptized into its holy religion, if his baptism be effectual, if he be baptized into Christ, is baptized into his death. The old man of sin, subject unto sin, dieth, and the new man liveth, subject unto Christ and unto righteousness.

What manner of men then ought we to be, who have partaken of this precious rite? Who, being enrolled in the number of Christ's flock, have pledged ourselves to follow him in his life and in his death? Do we wish to prove ourselves worthy of our profession, do we wish to make use of its advantages? If so, shall sin any more have dominion over us? Shall we yield ourselves voluntary servants of unrighteousness? Shall we not rather shake off the cruel captivity? Shall we not rather call in the aid of the Spirit of God, to purify our minds from the taint of inbred corruption; and then with its aid struggle against the desires of the flesh, as against a most malicious foe, who would deprive us of the benefits of salvation, and rob us of all that God in Christ hath given? Oh then, if we have hitherto done it, let us

deceive ourselves no more. Let us examine the spirits of our minds, let us probe our hearts, let us sift our affections, and see whether they be indeed dead unto sin, and thus freed from its yoke. If we voluntarily give way to the corrupt inclination of the flesh, to cast off God's law and gratify its own lusts, they are not so; and if they are not, let us, with that awful hour before us, when they must either live unto sin, or die to it for ever, strive earnestly, and entreat God that they shortly may be. This is the only preparation for death, and it is a preparation which ought to be as universal as death itself is certain. If it were, the destroyer would, even to our mortal apprehensions, be deprived of more than half his terrors; we should say of those who have submitted to the stroke, "they have cast off their burden, they rest in the Lord;" and though naturally possessed with awe at the prospect of the mighty change, we should ourselves look forward to the hour of dissolution as to the putting off of a galling chain, a final escape from that which was most the object of our fears.

LECTURE IX.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.—CHRIST RISETH.

ACTS XVII. 32.

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.

HAVING, in the preceding lecture, consigned the body to the grave, with a well grounded hope in the gospel of Jesus Christ, that the dissolution is, to the redeemed and sanctified spirit, a final emancipation from bondage and corruption, let us consider whether there is any thing to look forward to with respect to the body itself which may rescue the work of Deity from its fellowship with clay, and prove it created for a destiny more glorious than, after a few short years of life and motion,

to sink down into an inanimate mass, to become a mouldering heap, and be mingled, without one distinctive mark, with the dust of the earth on which we tread. It is true that the gospel is in the first place directed to the benefit of that nobler part of us to which the body is only a subordinate, but yet the scripture does not leave us without a warrant for believing that, when the hour comes for the consummation of all things which the gospel has revealed, that also shall partake of the general renovation. We are told of a judgment, a judgment in the body according to works done in the body; and, as none have yet been judged, but that account is to be general and universal, when many of the bodies that shall there appear must have slept in the dust some thousands of years at least, and nearly all for a longer or a shorter time, the dead must be raised, and summoned from their tombs, that all flesh may stand before God. Nor do we believe that they shall be called up merely for that judgment, again to die and be dissolved, but that they shall then become the permanent

habitations of the immortal spirit, and be the tabernacle in which it is to abide whatever doom it shall please the justice or mercy of God to assign.

That there is a tribunal which shall take cognizance for eternity of the deeds done in time, is not a doctrine peculiar to revelation. It was taught by the poets and mythologists of ancient Greece, and generally received by the people. They looked forward to a strict and impartial scrutiny of their actions, to take place after the separation of the soul from the body; but they had no idea, either that after the sleep of death the body could be raised up again to life, or that it would be, in order that the soul might enter it again, and the perfect man appear at the bar where the final sentence was pronounced.

If we look at the occurrences which took place at Athens, at the time that St. Paul preached there the "resurrection of the dead," we shall find them according with this statement. Athens, at the time the apostle visited it, was more famed for philosophy and wisdom than any other city in the world. To their reputation for

wisdom, the Athenians also added that of paying peculiar respect and veneration to their gods; they erected magnificent temples to their honour, as habitations of their statues, and endeavoured to propitiate each by such rites as they imagined best suited to their respective natures. But there was one God whom they did not know, one whose nature they confessed unfathomable, and that was the true God, the one Almighty Creator of the universe, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," "whose offspring we are."* That there must be such a Being, their wise men had long since discovered, and it was a truth so evidently founded on the plainest principles of nature and reason that, once known, it could not be a great while before it was generally received. Accordingly the people acknowledged His existence and would have worshipped Him, but they knew not how, they knew not the manner of His dealings with mankind, they knew not by what symbols to represent Him, in fact their philosophers taught them that it was very doubtful whether the Lord of all

* Arati Phœn. vers. 5.

things could interest Himself in the affairs of men at all.*

Still, however, whatever might be their ignorance and doubts, so awful and mysterious a Being was not to be treated with neglect; if indeed they were under his eye it were dangerous not to conciliate Him, so they worshipped Him as one of whom they had no knowledge, and, under the influence of *superstitious fear*,† paid their vows on the altar of the "unknown God."‡ This altar

* Cudworth's Intel. Sys. Warburton's Div. Leg.

† δεισιδαιμονεστέρες.

‡ Lucianus in Philopat. Philostrat. Apol. lib. 6. cap. 2. Pausan. in Eliacis.—I do not think I can be wrong in giving this account of the altar of the unknown God: though it differs in some degree from that of approved commentators. Some of these have supposed the altar to have been erected by the Athenians, under an apprehension that there might be some deity whose claims to divine honours had been overlooked, and that they took this method of guarding against any possible mistake in a matter of so much consequence. However, I think the words of St. Paul, "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him I declare unto you," evidently shew that he, at least, supposed it to belong, not to some deity who might or might not be in existence, but to an actual living God, of whose existence the Athenians were perfectly aware, but whose nature and properties were to them unknown. Allowing this to be the one supreme God (and such a one could be no other), and to have been understood to be so by all parties, the whole scene at Mars' Hill is invested with a new character.

was seen by the apostle St. Paul, and being shortly after summoned before the court of Areopagus, whose duty it was to regulate state religion, to give an account of his doctrine, he took advantage of the circumstance and announced that "whom they ignorantly worshipped, Him he declared unto them," and then declared Him to be "the God who commandeth all men every where to repent," adding the reason, "because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance in that He hath raised him from the dead."* The doctrine of repentance, as a means of regaining God's forfeited favour, must have been, in some degree new to the assembly he was addressing, and would excite speculation and discussion among them, but still it contained nothing directly at vari-

Those of the assembly who were philosophers would stand attentively waiting an explanation of a subject which was frequently the theme of their own discussions, while we may conceive an inquiring people anxious to learn something more of a God whose existence and whose paternity were acknowledged by their own national poets, but whom, in the deficiency of farther light, they were fain ignorantly to worship.

* Acts xvii. 23, 30, 31.

ance with their preconceived notions; the assertion that God will hereafter judge the world in righteousness would be readily admitted by some and perhaps openly cavilled at by none, but when the apostle proceeded to declare that God had given them assurance of such future judgment in that he had raised a man to fill the office of his appointed judge, then it was that his teaching appeared to many of them as "vain babbling:" the doctrine of the resurrection was too hard for them, they knew not how it could be; wise in their own conceits, and inflated with the pride of worldly knowledge, they had no apprehension of the secret things of God, and, when they "heard of the resurrection of the dead," "mocked."

Now we of the present day, equally with the Athenians, must be utterly unable to explain, otherwise than as it is God's will, the causes of the resurrection of the dead; it is accounted for by no natural laws discovered since it was first preached to them by the inspired apostle, we, no more than they have witnessed any instance of it to establish our faith, and we could never

have supposed such a thing had it not been revealed to us by God. Yet to us it will be no subject of mockery, though we must allow it a more extended application than perhaps was done by the Athenians. We must understand, as was undoubtedly intended by St. Paul, not only that God has raised up Jesus Christ from the dead to be our judge, but that, in so doing, he has given us an assurance that we who are to be judged shall also be raised from the dead; that all we, after that death hath claimed and the corruption of the grave has exercised its loathsome powers on our mortal bodies, shall, by the power of the Word of God, resume these same bodies animated anew with life, and as we now are, and with this perfect frame, stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Our belief in this doctrine, independently of the immediate purpose for which the dead are to be raised, is grounded upon Christ's own resurrection. Without reverting to the general account to be rendered up to God at the end of the world, the mode of passing which securely and not the account itself is the essential part of the

gospel message, the Christian who has followed our gospel so far as to know what it is to be a partaker of the death of Christ, has reason sufficient for believing that his own body will not be confined in the grave for ever, from the fact that that of Christ was rescued from its power. The resurrection of Christ carries with it consequences the most important, and is fraught with hopes the most heart-cheering and sublime; it is in fact upon this that our belief in the benefits of redemption must after all rest, and if it were not established, notwithstanding miracles, signs, and wonders, our faith must in the end be clogged with an intolerable weight; we should have no proof that Jesus did not die as other men die, as himself under the curse, and owing that penalty to the unsatisfied justice of God. But when we know that though death had dominion for a time, yet the grave could not hold him, then we know the power given to the king of terrors to exterminate and destroy was exhausted on the sacrifice of the cross, that his arm has become feeble, and unable to retain his victims in its grasp.

There are, however, some prior considerations connected with the resurrection of Christ, which must be brought under notice ere we can arrive at the consequence that the bodies of the saints shall rise again unto life. If Christ had been as other men, neither his death nor his resurrection would have had any ulterior effect upon our destiny. It might have pleased God to restore him as he did the Shunamite's son by the word of Elisha,* or as Jesus himself called Lazarus from the tomb, and yet there would have been nothing for us to dwell upon beyond the mere manifestation of the power of God. The resurrection, therefore, must be viewed in connexion with previous events, and then we shall discover why it was so essential that St. Paul said, "If Christ be not raised your faith is vain.† We shall find how that it was itself a pledge that it was not unconnected with the gospel scheme, and what were the benefits it foreshewed.

I. In the first place the resurrection of Christ was *a proof of his divine mission.*

It was so, because he all along foretold

* 2 Kings iv. 34, 35. † 1 Cor. xv. 17.

it as the means by which he should defeat the designs and malice of his enemies. He well knew the object for which he was sent into the world, namely, to do away with the consequences of sin, and restore man to the exalted place he held in the scale of creation ere he fell from it by disobedience. In order to this, he had a human nature capable of suffering, by way of atonement, the whole penalty of sin, along with a divine one which, as soon* as the atonement was finished and its benefits came into operation, did, by its power, take and apply those benefits to the human nature with which it was united.† The

* We may say "*as soon*," for the sleep of death was only long enough to prove that Jesus was really dead; which fact would not have been clearly established had his body been reanimated as soon as taken from the cross.

† In the second chapter of St. John, verse 19, Christ expressly declares, according to every reasonable mode of interpretation, and according to the interpretation of the evangelist himself, that *he will raise up his own body from the dead.* But in 1 Cor. vi. 14, and in Rom. viii. 11, it is as expressly asserted, that it was God that raised up Christ the Lord. Either, then, the two passages cannot be reconciled, for this is a case in which God cannot be said to have acted by the instrumentality of Christ, so that the action might, in that way, be referred to both, or else Christ, when he spoke was conscious of a divine nature essentially a part of himself, which, when his body was

penalty of sin was death, sin atoned for death should be no more, therefore the Deity restored life and Jesus was raised from the dead. If Christ's mission were divine he was of course aware of the great object for which he was sent, and of the fruit his sacrifice was to produce, and therefore, when he spoke of his death, he foretold also that he should rise again.* If he had after this laid in the grave till corruption had done its work, we must have deemed him a visionary and an enthusiast, but as he came forth again we know that he did not overrate his powers, that he came from the Father to fulfil the great work his mercy had devised.

II. Secondly, Christ's resurrection was *a proof that his atonement was accepted.*

As it was a proof of his divine mission, so also was it a proof that the object of that

laid in the grave, would be alive with power to raise it up again. And the divine nature must have been *so* essentially a part of himself that it is equally true whether we say that Christ raised himself, or that God raised him; i. e. Christ is God, and God is Christ. And this is a proof of Christ's divinity which I think few *can*, and I am sure none *ought* to withstand.

* Matt. xx. 19.

mission was fulfilled. When God's justice was satisfied by him that became flesh, there was no longer a reason why that flesh should be under the consequence of the curse;* but till that was done there

* It is plain that there was no longer a reason, i. e. there was now nothing in the divine law which required that Christ should remain subject to the curse after the justice of God was satisfied, and yet if Christ had not been God he must have remained so. And this is evident from the nature of the penalty he undertook to pay. This penalty was *extreme*. Now it belongs to an *extreme penalty*, that whenever it is actually inflicted, however much it may benefit others by its being accepted in lieu of their own just debt, yet the sufferer himself cannot derive any advantage from the satisfaction so made to the claims of justice, because that which he has suffered effectually puts him out of the reach of the enjoyment of any benefit whatever, whether of pardon or of a remission of a part of the sentence imposed. Thus Christ's mortal nature, if unaccompanied by an immortal, quickening, and therefore divine spirit, over which the extreme penalty had no power, being once dead must have remained so, there is no conceivable way in which it could have been raised up again unto life. It certainly cannot be denied that He who condemned mankind might, by his power, have raised up Christ from the dead, but yet we fear not to assert that such a proceeding would have been inconsistent with his scheme of redemption, and any idea of a full satisfaction made to the claims of his justice. Allowing the doctrine of an atonement, of a propitiation for the sin of mankind, offered and accepted in the person of Christ, to deny his Divinity involves a tissue of inconsistencies of which this is not the least, *that that God who imposed the extreme penalty, Himself took care, by an exercise of his power, that when inflicted on the selected atonement*

was an inevitable necessity that it should; therefore the fact of the atoning sacrifice being itself emancipated from it, is a proof that the atonement was accepted and the justice of God satisfied for ever. Hence St. Paul triumphantly asks, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God."* That is, who is he that would now lay us under condemnation for sin? Did not Christ die as a propitiation for us all? Or rather, I would say, did he not shew us that condemnation was no more, when, having borne its weight, he was able to come forth from the tomb in which it had laid him, and rise to everlasting life and the right hand of a reconciled Father? If Christ's atonement had not

it should not be extreme, that is, not the one denounced against human sin. In this view of the case no adequate atonement can be recognized, nor is there any thing to reconcile mercy as it is displayed in Christ with the justice unalterably belonging to the divine character. But allow Jesus Christ to be God and man, and we have a nature which could at once suffer all and survive all, and, having survived all, and justice satisfied, could rise with power to free any human nature from the chains of death, and first his own, as an example and pledge to those who were to partake of the benefits of his redemption.

* Rom. viii. 34.

been accepted, any power that raised him up must have done it in opposition to the justice and decree of the Supreme God, and as this cannot be imagined, we must conclude that the Almighty Father was himself consenting to his resurrection, and did receive the man Christ Jesus to his heavenly places as cleansed from all imputed guilt, and as having made a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for those sins which he had taken upon himself. The scripture assures us that these sins were the sins of the whole world; and this brings us to the last and most important inference which we shall draw from the resurrection of Christ, namely, that it was

III. *A proof that the partakers of his salvation shall also rise, as benefited by his sacrifice, in the same way as himself.*

We have, from the beginning, been arguing on the supposition that, as Christ's human nature became liable to all the penalties of sin, so it enjoyed all the benefits of redemption, and became itself an example of what those benefits were. Thus, his soul, on its separation from the body,

died unto sin,* and became free from its assaults for ever, and his body, after that it was deposited lifeless in the tomb, rose to immortality and an equal freedom from infirmity and corruption. And with respect to both cases did he, as soon as each work was finished, give an immediate proof that these consequences of his death were not confined to himself, but extended to all the redeemed. Thus from the cross he took the *soul* of the penitent thief with him into paradise;† and "many *bodies* of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection,"‡ thus proving that he that had been crucified was both "the resurrection and the life."§ Therefore is he called "the beginning, the first born,"‖ the first begotten from the dead;"¶ the first of that countless host whose fleshly tabernacles shall in like manner be restored, when "He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall, in like manner quicken our mortal bodies,"** shall quicken them because Christ's was first quickened, becom-

* See preceding Lecture.

† Luke xxiii. 43. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 53. § John xi. 22.

‖ Col. ii. 18. ¶ Rev. i. 5. ** Rom. viii. 11.

ing a pledge, to those under the gospel, that in every way the grave was robbed of its victory and death of its sting. And that this is the proper inference to be drawn from Christ's resurrection we are assured by St. Paul in the first of Corinthians, "how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection then is Christ not risen."* So inevitably does the resurrection of the saints follow upon that of Christ, that the apostle says, if they be not raised, we may at once conclude that so neither was Christ.†

Having then so unfailing a pledge, so stable a hope, not only that the soul does, on its escape from the body, emancipate itself from sin and corruption for ever, but also that that body shall, at the end of time be itself restored to it, a fitting tabernacle throughout eternity, for after that resurrection there shall be "no more death," we are thus led to discover the main end and design of the gospel dispensation. And I

* 1 Cor. xv. 12, 13.

† For the full developement of this argument, see Pearson on the Creed, art. 11, *The Resurrection of the Body.*

think we cannot be mistaken in laying it down to be *the complete restoration of man, both soul and body, to the state in which he was originally created, not only as regards God's favour towards him, but also his own fitness for the enjoyment of his blissful presence.* Nor can we be wrong in concluding that, after the resurrection, that restoration is complete; that the soul which, under Christ, is a temple of the Holy Ghost, has, during its disunion from the corruption of the body, been made perfectly pure and holy, and that the materials of the body itself have, during the period of their dissolution, been, by a divine alchemy, so changed and cleansed, that the effects of the original sin are lost and done away for ever.

Thus it appears that, under the gospel scheme, that great change which we call death is subservient to the future perfection of the body as well as of the soul. But it is so only to those who, from having first been partakers of Christ's death, shall be also hereafter of his resurrection. These are they to whom the resurrection is, as to Christ himself, one of the benefits of the atonement offered by the Saviour and ac-

cepted by God, whose bodies Christ shall raise by the same power as once he raised his own.*

And to this glorious consummation, if indeed Christ be an example to the saints, "they that are Christ's at his coming"† might confidently look forward, even had they no revelation of the judicial office in which he was raised. It was this that glowed in the apostle's mind when he "counted all things but dung, if he might know the power of the resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead."‡ It was this that spread its holy visions before his enraptured sight, when he wrote, that "we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality."§

Yes; this is the triumph of the gospel; it leads us through the shadow of death, not to a fearful judgment before a God in

* John vi. 39, 40. † 1 Cor. xv. 29. ‡ Phil. iii. 8, 10, 11.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, 53.

whose sight no man can be justified, but to incorruption and immortality, over which "the second death has no power." The heathen could speak of a judgment, and the Pharisees of a resurrection,* but it is he alone that came forth from the tomb that shall, by his spirit, raise the body to incorruption and immortality.† He, when time is no more, shall gather together his saints from the graves wherein they lie, and place them in bright array at his own right hand.

And should this appear too wonderful—should it be deemed almost incredible that the particles of dust scattered to the winds of heaven should be again collected; that the food of worms should be found in shape as a man, that the relics of mortality deep

* Acts xxiv. 15.

† Rom. viii. 11. "It was the opinion of the Jews, derived from Ezek. xxxvii. 9, 10, that the resurrection shall be effected by virtue of the Holy Spirit. Thus was our Lord raised from the dead. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Thus, saith this verse, shall we be raised who are "the temple of the Holy Ghost." The promise of being raised by "the Spirit of Christ" belongs only to them whose bodies shall be raised to the resurrection of life eternal. As for others, they being only Christians in name, and not in truth and sincerity, and persons to whom Christ will then say, "I never knew you;" they shall be raised by the power of Christ, but not by virtue of any union with the Spirit of Christ." *Whitby* on Rom. xviii. 11.

hid in the caverns of the ocean should hear the voice of One summoning them to come forth; that the graves should be opened, and the rude and rotten heaps of the charnel-house appear, each bone adapted to bone, each muscle and sinew freshly and vigorously strung; let us consider the knowledge and power of Him who could devise and accomplish the salvation of a fallen race, suffering under a righteous curse. He surveys every part of the vast universe, he knows the place of every particle of matter of which the worlds and their inhabitants are framed, and consequently knows where each grain of human dust now lies concealed. He traces the once animated clay through every change, the caverns of the ocean are unlocked, and its deep and hidden things revealed unto Him; his eye pierces the cerements of the tomb, and knows each mouldering heap that lies buried in the sepulchres of ages. Thus far his *knowledge* extends, nor will his *power* be backward to accomplish his purposes. He who creates the soul unto life can create anew the body, he is able to bring again together the same

particles of dust, to re-animate the same clay, to combine, as before, the relics of mortality contained in the ocean and the grave. The bones of buried nations are spread out before him, and "thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."*

This is what the saints of God, the chosen of Christ, may look forward to with confidence and hope. Nor is this doctrine without its practical effects in this world; for surely such as wait in expectation of the precious promises of the gospel will look upon their mortal bodies as vessels of honour, dedicated to the service and the praise of God both here and hereafter. These are the bodies which shall be "sown in corruption" to be "raised in incorruption;" these are the bodies which shall be "sown in dishonour" to be "raised in glory;" which shall be "sown in weakness" to be "raised

* Ezek. xxvii. 6.

in power." Purify them then as heirs of incorruption; reverence them as heritors of glory; esteem them as instruments of power to be employed to the honour of the Almighty. Let not any one's pollution here belie his hopes of purity hereafter, but let him so rule the desires and affections of the flesh, as to descend into the tomb with a joyful expectation, in Christ Jesus, that, in that day when "all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and come forth," he shall be found ranked among "those that are Christ's," bodies raised to incorruption, and a holy and blessed immortality.

LECTURE X.

ENTRANCE INTO GLORY—CHRIST IS GLORIFIED.

JOHN XVII. 24.

Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.

SINCE it is a matter of scriptural certainty that Christ shall, at "the end," "by his spirit which dwelleth in us," raise up the bodies of those that are his in incorruption and immortality, to be quickened by a soul everlastingly redeemed from sin and purified from guilt, it becomes a subject of momentous inquiry, *to what these newly created beings are reserved.* Are they, as analogy might lead us to infer, to be placed, like the first of human race, in a world, fair

and beauteous indeed, but where their obedience is to be subjected to the same trial as before, and where, if they fall, we can have no hope but that they must fall, like the angels, never to rise again? Or, rather, may we not conclude that the probation, which it seems necessary, according to the purposes of God, that every creature must undergo ere he is finally established in his eternal destiny,* is mercifully permitted to terminate in this life, and that they will be raised by Christ to receive that which he is ready to give according to the measure of his love, and to give it for ever, an inheritance which passeth not away!

* It is quite evident that, apart from a scheme of merciful redemption, the advantages of a probation intended for moral discipline and improvement imposed on his creatures by a just and holy God, can only be secured by strict obedience to his prescribed law; but it is also as evident that if such discipline and improvement be necessary to final happiness, constituted as we now are, such a probation is only equivalent to condemnation. With respect to probation, the benefit we obtain by the sacrifice of Christ is this: The probation intended for Adam to exalt and stablish him, is still carried on, through Christ, to the same end, although the parties proved are not obedient. Through him our best efforts, made under the use of means ordained by himself, are allowed to work to the same effect as perfect obedience would have done, had it been found in man when he was capable of obeying his Maker's holy law.

Jesus Christ himself thus speaks of the benefits of redemption which he is permitted to bestow on those that are his own, "Father glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."* And then, knowing that his prayer was answered that he should be glorified, and that eternal life was in the presence of that glory, he declares how he will exhibit his power, "*Father, I will that those also whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold the glory which Thou hast given me.*" This it is then which we are to look forward to for the saints which sleep in the Lord,† they are *to be with Christ* and to *behold his glory*; and this is to be throughout eternity, for it is "eternal life;" we are to look forward to the participation in that which

* John xvii. 1, 2.

† By those whom God hath given unto Christ, and whom he willeth to take with him into glory, are meant, not only the apostles, but all who are led to believe in the name of Christ throughout the world. And this is evident from the twentieth verse of John xvii., in which he includes in his prayer for the saints, all that shall believe on him through the word of the apostles.

Christ has won for himself as the price of his great humiliation,* and which he has the "*will*" and "*power*" to bestow on those which God has given him, and which shall be proved to be his in that day when his people shall be known.

In that day Christ, being in the fruition of his glory, and having, by his power, raised his own from the dead,† and being invested, in right of his meritorious sufferings, with a further power to do with them what he will, he "*wills*" that they be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, and in the presence of his effulgence enjoy eternal life. Well then might the apostle ask in the strain of exulting hope, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" adding, "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."‡ He knew that Christ Jesus had the power to overcome all enemies, whensoever and wheresoever opposing, and that raising those that believed on him to the same resurrec-

* Phil. ii. 8, 9. † John vi. 39, 40. ‡ Rom. viii. 35, 38, 39.

tion with himself, he would unite them to him for ever in the glory of God the Father.

But it may be asked, what then becomes of the final judgment? If the saints be raised only that Christ may receive them into his glory, what becomes of the great scrutiny of works? The dead, *small and great*, must stand before God, and shall not those who have believed in Christ and are his, be found there? Yes indeed, the word of revelation is too express to allow us to suppose for a moment that any, even the most beloved of the Saviour, shall be exempt from appearing at that tribunal, and we do not hesitate to say that if that judgment were, as it is often supposed to be, a summing up of past works, a balancing of good and evil, to prove whether a man is in himself most fittted for heaven or for hell, not even the saints of Christ could stand before him in that awful hour; then, it might be a doubt how, even under the gospel, we can be saved at last. But the revelation of the gospel points to a far different notion of the purpose for which the human race are to be assembled at the bar of God. Before they appear there the fate of each

one is determined in the counsels of the divine mind, by a perfect agreement between the unerring justice of the Father, and the boundless mercy of the Son, and, when the number of the elect is accomplished, the quick and the dead are summoned, not to have the fact of their guilt or their innocence decided upon, but, that those who have neither part nor lot in the privileges of the gospel may be separated from those who are, and have been, partakers of them with Jesus Christ. Those that are recognized as Christ's, those that are given him by the Father, he *ranges at once on his own right hand, he separates them as sheep from the goats.** Having had the power to give them eternal life, even as he raised his own body from the dead, he looks upon them in no other light than as his own, as beings of his own creation whom he loves, and wills also that they should be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory and partake his joy.†

* Matt. xxv. 31.

† I believe that the statement here given of the nature of the judgment of the last day, is consistent with the scriptural account of that day, and also with the plan of salvation

Where, then, is the doubt how, under the gospel, we are to be saved at last?—Is it that there is a fearful judgment of

revealed in scripture, and that none other is or can be. In the first place, we find in scripture a difference in the *resurrection* of the just and the unjust; the first being *raised* by Christ in his character of Saviour, which is nowhere said of the others but is of the first, as see John vi. 39, 40, 54; Rom. viii. 11. The just therefore are counted so, and those that are Christ's are finally pronounced to be so, previously to any trial of works at the bar of God. Which same thing we also find signified by St. Paul when he expressed his ardent desire that "by any means he might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."—Phil. iii. 11. He well knew that as a man he must rise, but he wished to rise not as other men, but as the dead in Christ, plainly shewing a distinction between the two resurrections; Again, if there is this difference, between the resurrections of the two parties, there must be a difference in the end for which they are raised. We know that there is a difference, and that those which are Christ's look for something advantageous to themselves in the events subsequent to the resurrection which the rest are not entitled to expect. That which comes after the resurrection is the judgment, and the raised in Christ look for salvation; but let not the judgment be a trial of works, for then the offices of Redeemer and Judge, though vested in the same person, must palpably interfere and be at variance with each other, since even the redeemed, if resting on their own works, cannot be justified before God. No; I believe that Christ shields his people *from* a scrutiny that must condemn them, not that he shields them *during its progress*, for the latter notion involves obscurity and doubt; and, that it is that he may do so that he becomes our Judge as well as our Redeemer. The judgment is not a trial, but *a pronouncing of judgment*, a promulgation of God's final decrees with respect to the inhabitants of the earth, together

works in which the *justice* of God must condemn? This is not the hope to which we look forward. With him that dies in Christ, henceforth all is secure; his spirit, being a temple of the Holy Ghost, dies at once unto sin, his body is raised by Christ unto incorruption and immortality, and being placed at the bar of heaven he is recognized as belonging to the Lamb, and is welcomed at once into its blissful mansions.

with a statement of the reasons which influence the decisions of the Judge. Matt. xxv. 31. Again, we must remember that we are all by nature subject to God's righteous condemnation, and that there is not one to whom, if there were no Saviour, that condemnation would not come. Christ undertook to save mankind, and, in right of his meritorious sufferings, "power was given him over all flesh;" but that it might be done consistently with the claims of justice and God's righteousness, it was given him to redeem from the curse only those who should accept his salvation and become his own people, while those who do not accept him are left amenable to the original sentence of condemnation. Therefore, the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, that he may make the requisite distinction, and separate those who are his own, whom he has redeemed and purchased with his blood, and has the power and the will to reward with eternal life, from those who, not knowing him as a Saviour, can only know him as a Judge. And this he does irrespectively of the actual merits of either. Whatever may be the distinctive marks by which Christ knows his own, they are decided upon previously to, and not after the resurrection; after it, there remains nothing but to separate them from the rest, and to award to each party their final destiny of happiness or misery.

It is true that *all* are raised from the dead, but *all* are not raised by God in Christ; the rest having passed the life of their probation, and not having laid hold of the only means of salvation, are raised by the power of God, not to hear any new sentence, but the repetition of one long ago pronounced on unpardoned sin, and now justly delivered by him whose sufferings they caused, and whose salvation they despised. It is true that *all* appear at the bar of heaven, but *all* shall not have known a Saviour; the rest not being acknowledged by Christ, are not received by him into glory, and are left to abide their own portion in the blackness of darkness for ever. Their own works are read from the book of record to prove to themselves and the assembled universe that the sentence of God is just, and that he condemneth not without a cause; whilst the names of those that are Christ's are read from "the book of life," also proving that they have accepted God's appointed deliverance, and that it is not without reason or a sufficient atonement, that he now casts a veil over their transgressions, and their sins behind his back.*

* I cannot perceive how any thing but the idea of the dis-

It appears from this statement, that the final acceptance of the creature, on that day when the destiny of each is finally pronounced, depends entirely upon whether or not he is Christ's. And it follows also that the space, which we call time, is a period appointed by God, during which souls are created and placed in the world, that, out of them, a certain number, that God has given him, may become Christ's; and this, we doubt not, will go on till the number of the elect is accomplished; that is, the number which the decree of God, before the world began has appointed to stand before Him and serve Him, and which decree, through Christ's mercy, man's wilful disobedience has not been able to set aside. When this is fulfilled time will be no more, and God in Christ will welcome into eternity all those who, during time, have had

tinct persons and offices of the Father and Son can afford a reasonable scheme of salvation. God, as God, is a just and holy God, and we cannot mention to Him our works, our only safety would be in concealing all from Him, but the Son stoops to our infirmities, and, having gained a right to make a selection of saints, he accepts our best efforts, made according to the prescribed means, in lieu of perfection, and then, by the power of his Godhead, really makes his chosen, what God the Father requires them to be, and will accept.

their names inscribed in the book of everlasting life.

Now, although these are styled the "*elect*," or the chosen, it would be contrary, both to the justice of God, and to his blessed revelation, to suppose that every one has not the power given him to be of that number if he will. That part of time which is called a life is the period in which it is decided to each one, and it is if a man then becomes Christ's, that Christ will sanctify his spirit, raise his body, and take him to himself in glory.

We do not hesitate to say that it is Christ's favour, Christ's grace, Christ's power, the same power that pledged itself to us by raising up his own body from the grave and taking with him into the holiest the poor nature in which he died, to which alone this salvation is to be ascribed, and that the very elect, in estimating their own works have abundant reason to thank God that their names being inscribed in the book of life prevents their being submitted to an account. But though we acknowledge with gratitude and wonder that those who are Christ's will, on the day of final judg-

ment, be recompensed according to what they are as his, and not according to what they have been as men, still we must not fall into the grievous error of supposing that the *wish* to belong to Christ is sufficient, or that our own efforts, though they cannot avail us before God hereafter, have nothing to do with making us Christ's here.—Whilst we reject the notion that Christ's election is arbitrary, we are, unless we have recourse to universal salvation, driven back to a certain fitness in ourselves. If there be any reality in the glorious gospel, we have endeavoured to build up on the sure foundation of the scriptures and the Saviour, we are driven to faith and its effects, *repentance*, *prayer*, and *holiness*. We are besides forced irresistibly to own, that though good works cannot be sufficiently perfect to endure the severity of God's judgment,* yet, combined with mortification of sin, they may be sufficiently perfect to shew that we are Christ's, and further that, if there be any faith in the sanctifying operations of the spirit, that fact can be evidenced by

* Article xii.

nothing else, either in the eyes of men, of angels, or of God.

And oh! how utterly unworthy of the moral government of the Creator, to suppose that he will exert his omnipotence and mercy in behalf of wilful sin and disobedience; and how utterly repugnant to any idea of worthiness or perfection in a Saviour, to deem that the influences of his Spirit can do other than exalt and purify those to whom the blessed communication is extended. Weak and imperfect still must be all our efforts; but though we are forbidden to glory in them, or to glory in any thing save the cross of Christ Jesus our Lord, how holy a ray does it shed over the twilight of the Christian's pilgrimage, to deem that his works are even now beginning to flow from the fountain of God itself. Yes! here is the praise of Christianity, here is the triumph of the gospel! whatever value *his own works* may assume in the eyes of that man who deems them meritorious and worthy of reward, yet, even allowing his claims to be valid, they can be counted, at best, but the poor efforts of weakness and imperfection, and cannot in

reality be compared with those of the most self-abased penitent, which proceed, in part at least, from the Spirit of the Most High God. And more than this, there is to him who, feeling his human nothingness and infirmity, looks upon all he does as little better than filthy rags, *a blessed comfort in righteousness*, which even that man cannot feel who rests upon it his hopes of everlasting salvation. With him, however, he may pride himself on the performance of duties, there must be ever a trembling doubt how his deeds shall endure the scrutiny of the judgment, and what character they shall wear in the sight of an all-seeing God. But not so is it with the self-abased, though confiding disciple of Jesus; whenever, actuated by the love of God and of his Christ, he is enabled to do any thing which is according to his will, poor and unworthy as he knows himself to be, he is yet permitted to rejoice with more than hope in the evidence of the holy operations of the Spirit *sealing* him by that sign "unto the day of redemption,"* as the beloved, the elected of Jesus Christ our Lord. He is permitted to

* Eph. iv. 30.

rejoice in each effort of prayer, in each abandonment of sin, in every manifestation of holiness, not as meeting the sum of what he ought to do, but as a pledge that he is known of Christ, that he is his here, and will be taken by him into glory hereafter.

And now we can better understand how the declaration of scripture, *that we shall be judged according to our works*, is consonant with the gospel scheme. When we consider that obedience to the divine law is, not only a pledge to the Christian, but also the very sign by which Christ knows us, that it is the very fruit which proves to him that we are of the true vine, we perceive that it is, after all, according to our works that we are accepted or rejected by the supreme God. Christ makes his election by manifestations of holiness,* by proofs of the

* That this is the case, is, I think, proved by the account of the judgment given in Rev. xx. 12—15. It is there stated, that two descriptions of books are brought forward, and, though it is expressly said, that those who are "*not found*" already "written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire," plainly shewing a decision on the part of God prior to the final judgment, yet it is also said, that "the dead are judged out of those things which are written in the books *according to their works*," that is, it has been according to works that the names of the redeemed have been written by the Saviour in the

regeneration of his Spirit shed abroad without measure on the church;* and thus it being according to works that the Christian's name is written by the Saviour in the book of life, it is *according to them as signs*, though *not by or through them as means*, that on the day of consummation of all things the Great God puts on his countenance of love, and welcomes him as one who had never fallen, as one whose deeds need no scrutiny because there is no suspicion of his guilt. When the throne of the judgment is set, it is the Saviour himself that sitteth thereon, he sits there in a two-fold character, a Saviour still to those whom he has, long ere this, recognized and sealed as his own, and whom he has now raised by

book of life. Christ, having been subject to our temptations, and thus being "touched with the feeling of our infirmities, is willing, as well as, by the satisfaction made by him to justice, able, to accept from his people a less perfect obedience, than the God who, in his dealings with mankind, knows them as a race he originally created pure, and who, if they are fallen, are fallen by wilful disobedience, and justly subject to his righteous indignation.

* Such proofs it is undoubtedly in the power of every one to exhibit, for the Spirit supplies the place of Christ's actual presence to the church, and is therefore equally ready to lead to salvation, equally at hand for all to find.

his power with a perfect fitness to receive the glorious promises of his gospel, an omnipotent and avenging God to those whose deeds, inscribed in all their naked deformity in the books opened before him, irresistibly prove them to be the children of disobedience, unrenewed in aught, inheritors of everlasting death.

Such I believe to be the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*, and thus have I hitherto endeavoured, by God's grace, to trace it through its effects to its end and consummation, to tell the blessings it affords in life, the hope it supplies in death, the privileges it confers hereafter. God grant that it be a meet superstructure, raised on the only sure foundation, which is in Christ Jesus. Looking upon him as the author, and finisher, and great example of our faith, I have striven to draw from the pure wells of scripture the waters of life, untainted by the adulterations of human imagination. Abstaining from discussions on the meaning of contro-

verted terms, I have been fain to preserve in their perfection and sufficiency, the essentials of Christianity, and to pander to no man's appetite. Conscious I am of *weakness and infirmity*, of *unstable faith*, of *imperfect knowledge*, of *limited vision*, but yet I trust that that God, whose omnipotent power, whose inflexible justice, whose boundless mercy it has been my desire to set forth in truth and singleness of heart, after the admirable pattern of the gospel, has not left me entirely blind, nor without a guide to direct my steps to Him as he is in Jesus, through the mazes of conflicting faiths.

One rule, I think, I may confidently offer as a test of doctrine "*whether it be of God*," '*Does it, when reduced to practice, shew itself in holiness, real spiritual holiness flowing from the Spirit in the heart, which, while it manifests itself in good works, fixes the affections upon God?*' I have not spoken of justification by faith, but I have done nothing if, in striving to set aside the claims of human merit, and to lead the heart to Jesus as strength and salvation, I have not made it clear to the humble inquirer after righte-

ousness that it is only belief in the gospel and its Mighty Lord which can, on his part, bring him to God. Every duty inculcated pre-supposes this along with the ability to perform it, every privilege offered pre-supposes it in the recipient. Therefore it is, that "without faith it is impossible to please God," though the author of our justification be Christ, and Christ alone. And let him that would have faith see what that is in which he is required to believe, and then say whether his faith can be other than one working by love. A doctrine, to be received effectually, must be received, not partially, but wholly, it cannot be separated from its practical effects. Is it *the necessity of a Saviour?* It cannot be separated from a flying to Christ.—Is it *repentance?* It cannot be separated from an abandonment of sin.—Is it *prayer?* It cannot be separated from an entire dependence upon God.—Is it *the operations of the Spirit?* It cannot be separated from holiness of heart and mind, from love to God and man, from resistance against temptation, from humble resignation to the will of a heavenly Father, from continual and earnest prayer.

Is it the *death of the body as it dies in Christ!* It cannot be separated from a previous death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness.—And if we look to that which is beyond—the *resurrection of the dead, the habitations of just men made perfect, Christ glorified, and the presence of the omnipotent God*—how can we fix it in our hearts and minds without an earnest wish, an eager longing to assimilate ourselves to our anticipated state of being? Nay, I do not believe that that man, whose words and deeds are habitually carnal and earthly, can ever be possessed with an unmingled desire to bear his part in the employments of the eternal worlds.

I have said that the end of the gospel scheme was to restore man to that degree of perfection in which he was originally created; but verily, I think it to be much more than that; verily I believe that the sufferings of Christ have wrought out for his elect a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, and that the second creation will be far more glorious than the first.* And shall then the feet, hereafter to

* The scrutiny at the end of probation now is, not of works,

tread the courts of God himself, lead us to the habitations of uncleanness? Shall the hands, hereafter to string the harps of heaven, be made over to deeds of darkness? Shall the lips, hereafter to give echo to the songs of the angelic host, give utterance to blasphemy and profaneness? Shall the eyes, hereafter to be fixed on the bright and burning rows of seraphim on the throne of God, and Him that sitteth on the throne, send forth the glance of lasciviousness, or delight in sights and visions of impurity? Where the scene of our beatitude shall be, it matters not. Whether it be exalted high up in the illimitable regions of space, or whether, like the body from the grave, a new creation, new heavens, and a new earth in which the righteous shall dwell, shall rise from the ruins of the old, it matters not.

but whether we are Christ's, and approval may bring with it more glorious consequences, inasmuch as to belong to the Son of God is probably more than obedience itself could do for us. Thus man may be led, through Christ, to a higher state of being than he could have obtained had he not fallen; for Christ redeemed man only on condition that he should take him to himself, and pour upon him for ever the abundance of his exceeding love and glory.

Whatever abode God has assigned for the spirits of the redeemed, there also is Christ: there his love; there his glory, shining upon and blessing his chosen saints, the inheritors of the promises of the gospel.

APPENDIX.

BAPTISMAL REGENERATION.

In making the doctrine of the church of England, whatever it may be, the basis of the succeeding inquiries, I am anxious not to invest myself with the character of a disputant in behalf of the opinions of any man, or set of men whatever; on the contrary, I only wish to extricate the real truth from a mass of surrounding controversy and mistake; and should any of the expressions used by the church in her articles or baptismal service, when taken in their plain and obvious meaning, prove to be unwarranted by scripture, neither the authority of her name, nor the bias of private inclination shall prevent my withholding my assent, either to the expressions themselves, or to the tenets they are intended to convey. The authority of her name gives her a pre-

scriptive right to have her opinions made the basis of argument, but it does nothing more; neither the greatness of a name nor the approbation of ages will sanctify a departure from the simplicity of revealed truth.

The subject of regeneration in baptism has already been briefly alluded to in the course of the foregoing work.* I there stated it as my decided opinion, that a certain regenerating influence of the Spirit does accompany the rite when duly and properly administered. Neither have I since become aware of any reason for an alteration in my sentiments, nor does the argument on which the doctrine was made to depend, namely, the example afforded us in the circumstances of Christ's baptism, seem to me less satisfactory than before. Since, however, it is very far from probable, that any single argument should be satisfactory to all parties, it appears to me that the subject requires a more full and lengthened consideration; and more so, because much variety of opinion as to the meaning and extent of the term, regeneration in baptism,

* See notes to Lectures i. and ii.

exists, even among those by whom, as members of the church of England, the doctrine itself is, at least, formally embraced. On these grounds I am desirous both of *establishing more fully the scriptural doctrine on the subject*, and also of *ascertaining what the meaning of the church is when she speaks of baptized persons being regenerate.*

On referring to the article on baptism,* and to the service appointed for the public baptism of infants, we find it declared in the first, that "baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are distinguished from others that are not christened, but it is also *a sign of regeneration or new birth*, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church;" in the second, we find the minister assuring the congregation that the baptized child "*is regenerate*," and also returning thanks to God "that it hath pleased him to *regenerate the infant* with his Holy Spirit, and to receive him *for his own child* by adoption." Here the doctrine appears to be plain and express, and yet there are not

* Article xxvii. of the church of England.

wanting varieties of acceptation even of these few and simple words. Some subscribe to them according to the exact letter of the assertion, believing that every rightly baptized person is at once and absolutely regenerate; others affirm, that facts make it evident that, in order to preserve the spirit of the assertion, we must not hold too closely to the letter. According to the views of the latter, two explanations of the words are usually given, which, if I comprehend them rightly, are as follows:

1. It is evident from scripture that Christ intended baptism to be a sign and means of regeneration by the Spirit, and, accordingly, whenever the regenerating spirit is vouchsafed, it is by and through the instrumentality of that divinely appointed rite. But the subsequent lives of many baptized persons prove that they cannot have received the adoption of sons of God, therefore the church does not intend to make an unqualified assertion that every baptized infant is regenerate, but providing for the due administration of the rite *charitably* supposes that fitness in the recipient, which is also necessary to make the rite effectual.

2. Baptism is the sign of a covenant made by God with man through the mediation of Jesus Christ, by which God stipulates to impart to baptized persons the regenerating influences of his Holy Spirit. But a covenant implies the fulfilment of certain conditions on the part of those who are to partake of the benefits of that covenant. In the present instance these conditions are repentance and faith; without them baptism is a mere sign of an unfruitful profession, nothing but an unproductive form; with them, or followed by them, it becomes a means of grace. The church, therefore, when she baptizes infants who cannot perform these conditions, and then returns thanks for their regeneration, does so *prospectively*, she *charitably* expects that points so essential to eternal salvation will not be neglected by any of her avowed members.

I believe I have given these opinions fairly, as I have heard and seen them stated; and I must confess that however correct either of them may be on the subject of baptism itself, yet viewed as explanations of the doctrine as declared by the

church of England, they are any thing but satisfactory to me as a member of that church. According to the first, the church, being unable to ascertain that which depends on the secret counsels of God, and holding, that where regeneration is vouchsafed it is by baptism as the appointed means, takes it for granted, not that every baptized person is regenerate, but only that he is so till experience proves the contrary, which indeed it very often does. According to the second, the efficacy of baptism as a sacrament is produced, not by that which is, but by that which is to come, and the church indulges in such confident anticipations as to speak of that which is only future and allowedly contingent, as if it were actually and certainly present. In fact, holding the first opinion, whenever I use the baptismal service I return thanks for *that which may or may not be, but which I hope is*; holding the second, I return thanks for *that which I know is not, but which I hope will be.* Now, I cannot believe that the church intended me to do either, or to thank God for any thing but what had actually taken place. Her words are express. On the subject of

regeneration no room whatever is allowed for uncertainty, for hope, or for anticipation. With her, every rightly baptized person, and therefore every baptized infant, *is* regenerate; and, if there is any meaning in words, I must either believe so too, or else cease to use a service containing assertions which I can only subscribe to through the medium of a sophistical explanation.

It will, however, be remembered that concerning the rite itself of baptism, no attempt has yet been made to determine the scriptural correctness of either of the above opinions. Either may be right. All that I assert at present is, that they are incompatible with the straightforward declaration of the church, and that she never intended her words to be used by those who hold them, because in fact her assertions do not admit of being explained away. As they are written so they must be judged, and it is to the inspired Word alone that we can refer the question, whether they shall stand or fall.

When Christ delivered to his chosen disciples a commission to go and baptize all nations, no mention was made of the

kind of inward effect the rite was calculated to produce in the baptized person; it was not even affirmed that it would have any; still less was it promised that it would be accompanied by any influences of the Holy Spirit, working a complete change in man's condition and state by nature. The most that can be gathered from the circumstances of its institution, and those of its administration to the first converts is, first, that it was a necessary rite;* secondly, that it was intended to be an initiatory rite, by which a man professed himself a believer and was admitted to the privilege of following his divine Master in the path leading to salvation. So far then, baptism is only a sign or token of a Christian man's profession, the distinguishing badge of the candidate for gospel privileges. Has it, beyond this, any power of insuring him the possession of those privileges, and the end of them, which is eternal life? If it has not, it is plain that the uniform and standard of the soldier do just as much towards placing the victory in his hands, as baptism towards procuring his crown of

* Mark xvi. 16.

salvation for the Christian. In it he binds himself by a certain "sacramentum militare," and is invested with a badge by which he knows in whose company he is to fight, and under whose orders he is placed, but he receives no accession of personal ability to achieve the task which is assigned to him.

This, however, is not the view taken by the church. Of the necessity of *regeneration, or a new birth,* the scriptures do not admit of a doubt.* They are equally explicit as to the advantages resulting from it, namely, *adoption into God's family, and a joint heritage with Christ;* and also as to the *agency by which it is effected,*† namely, that of *the Holy Spirit of God.* It is of this new birth, and its advantages, that baptism is asserted to be a sign.—Now, if this be the case, it is also a sign of the presence of him by whose agency it is effected, that is of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and its consequent operations on the heart. But farther than this, if baptism be a sign of regeneration, it must be believed to be so *because* it is a sign of the presence of the

* John iii. 3. † Rom. viii. 15.

Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is not only the sole agent by whom regeneration is produced, but he is to Christians unfailingly such an agent; wheresoever he is present, regeneration is the necessary result of his operations; therefore *the presence of the Holy Ghost in baptism*, and *regeneration in baptism* are equivalent terms, and if we are able to prove one, we are also able to prove the other. I believe all will go with me thus far; and having established this fact, in order to prevent confusion, and ensure perspicuity in the succeeding argument, I shall now proceed to inquire from scripture what baptism ought to be believed to be.

It is certainly very remarkable, that as soon as the operations of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men are mentioned in the gospels, they are mentioned in connexion with baptism. John proclaims of Christ that he shall *baptize* with the Holy Ghost; it is after submitting to the same rite that Christ himself is filled with the Spirit;*

* Compare John i. 32 and Matt. iii. 16, with Luke iv. 1, and observe the remark of Bishop Sherlock on the latter, "We see here the power of baptism and the blessings annexed to it, to which we all are entitled who partake in the baptism of Christ.

and again, when Christ announced the paramount importance of regeneration, he immediately connected that of the Spirit, to which he alluded and which was peculiar to his gospel, with that of the sprinkling of water, "*Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" By many this text is considered conclusive, and indeed commentators are almost agreed in teaching that our Lord here speaks of baptismal regeneration.* If, however, their opinion is to go for nothing, as that of men contending for previously embraced opinions, we may well ask, if the text does not speak of baptism and the regeneration of the Spirit as connected with it, of what does it, and of what can it speak? Nicodemus, not comprehending Christ's doctrine of a new birth, is told that he must be born of water and the Spirit. Now, we are well aware that the sole *agent* in the operation must be the Spirit, that the water could do nothing towards effecting an inward change, but yet if it was not ordained of God that the inward Spirit should accompany the outward

* See Whitby, Beveridge, Taylor, &c.

sign, and be present only in conjunction with it, how can the new birth be said to be of both united? It was not the regeneration of water of which Nicodemus had to be informed, with that he was already acquainted, for the Jews made proselytes by washing them with water, and counted them new-born persons, but the inward regeneration of the Spirit, which he then learned was to accompany the sprinkling of initiation when transferred into the gospel covenant.

The next passage I shall adduce in order to establish the scriptural doctrine of baptism, is from the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, "*Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.*"* By referring to the original we shall see more plainly than we do in the translation that "the washing of water" is spoken of as *the actual instrument* in the hands of Christ for the purification of the church.† But the sanctification and cleans-

* Eph. v. 25, 26.

† Ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ, καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι·

ing of a church, so that it may be "glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," may not be ascribed to a mere outward washing of water, even though it be ordained by Christ himself, unless some inward grace be ordained to accompany it. No; the glorious effects here mentioned can belong only to the operations of the Spirit of God. We must say to the church thus sanctified and cleansed, "Ye are washed," not with water only, but, as the Apostle, "ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* The conclusion is evident. The washing of water, as appointed in the Word, sanctifies and cleanses; but it is only as accompanied by the Holy Spirit, because to none other but the Spirit can sanctification and purification be ascribed. Therefore baptism implies the operative presence of the Spirit, therefore baptism is a sign of regeneration.

We will now turn to the third chapter of the epistle to the Galatians.† "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have*

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Gal. iii. 27.

put on Christ." And here, instead of offering any comments of my own, I shall make use of the words of Bishop Beveridge, as expressing my own sentiments, but in all probability with much greater clearness and perspicuity than I could express them myself. "They who are in Christ," says he, "members of his body, must needs partake of the Spirit that is in him, their head. Neither doth the Spirit of Christ only follow upon, but *certainly accompanies, the sacrament of baptism when duly administered according to his institution.* For, as St. Paul saith, 'By one spirit we are all baptized into one body.'* So that in the very act of baptism the Spirit unites us unto Christ." If then the Spirit uniting us unto Christ certainly accompanies the rite of baptism, baptism is a sign of the operative presence of the Spirit, therefore again baptism is a sign of regeneration.

The last passage I shall examine is that remarkable one in the epistle to Titus: "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

have done, but according to his mercy *he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*"* Here it appears that the love and kindness of God our Saviour toward guilty man did, in Jesus Christ, put two means of salvation into operation, and also rendered those means effective. These means are "the washing of regeneration" and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost." There is nothing here to make us suppose them the same, or even simultaneous, in fact the complexion of the passage leads us to suppose that the apostle spoke of two distinct things as acting upon the soul to its salvation: one, the process of regeneration, through the washing of water in baptism; the other, renewal, by the influences of the Spirit. They are both necessary; but there is no evidence either that both must take place together, or, unless from some supposed relation that regeneration and renewal bear to each other, that the one is a necessary consequence of, or even comes by and through, the other. So far then, as the authority of this text on the subject

* Titus iii. 5.

in question depends on the juxta-position in which "the washing of regeneration" and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" are placed, I am willing to give it up. I am willing to allow that there is no proof that "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," whatever it may signify, is either begun or completed in baptism, or even necessarily follows from it. If, however, renewal, or renovation, of the Holy Ghost is to be kept separate from baptism, which is the washing of regeneration, there at once arises, according to this view, a demonstration that renewal and regeneration are not the same things, and therefore, though baptism be not a sign of the one, to which indeed the passage cannot afford more than a negative proof, that gives no reason for supposing that it is not a sign of the other, and we are at liberty to make use of the obvious inference held out by the expression "the washing of regeneration," namely, that it is in baptism that regeneration does take place.*

* It is evident that the same kind of reasoning which has been here applied to Titus iii. 5, may, if necessary, which I do not think it is, be also applied to John iii. 5, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit." Suppose that in this

I think the passages of Scripture here adduced and examined are sufficient to ascertain the fact that the church is not wrong in stating baptism to be "a sign of regeneration;" or, as in another place, *a sacrament, defined to consist of two parts, an outward and visible sign and an inward and spiritual grace, whereof the first is a means whereby the second is received;* and which, therefore, are not to be deemed, or considered separate, so that the one is only to be looked for prospectively, as the possible result of the other at some future and uncertain period, but which must be held to accompany each other and go together, so that that which is the thing signified follows immediately upon that which is the sign.*

text the birth of the Spirit is a distinct and separate thing from the birth of water, still he who is born of water only, is, in the language of Scripture, "*born again*," is regenerate. And even this must be effected by means of the Spirit of God. The washing of water in baptism can do nothing towards a new birth unless Christ is present in the rite, and it is by his Holy Spirit that Christ is so present, as every where else to his church, according to his own blessed promise.

* It is well known that the doctrine of regeneration in baptism was so decidedly embraced in the primitive church that baptism and regeneration became convertible terms. "From the beginning," says Whitby on the text Titus iii. 5, "the word

And here it would seem that, as far as the church is concerned, the question might be set at rest; she is right in prescribing thanksgiving for the absolute regeneration of all baptized infants; as soon as baptized they are certainly and unconditionally regenerate. And so indeed we might conclude, were it not certain that to insure the efficacy of a sacrament two things are necessary—a proper administration, and a proper reception. It will be allowed by, at least, the great majority of Christians, that the church has done every thing in her power to provide for the proper administration of the rite, so that if any uncertainty still exist it must be owing to the possible unfitness of the recipient. Now, with respect to an initiatory rite, ordained by Christ himself as a sign of admission into his church, and on which, as on a means, the regenerating influences of the Spirit are promised to attend, we cannot conceive that any thing else will constitute unfitness in a recipient, except the positive presence of something opposing and precluding the entrance of

rendered regeneration (παλιγγενεσια) was used to denote baptism, as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus inform us."

the Spirit in the heart, and thus standing, as it were a barrier, between the baptized person and any accession of the benefits offered to mankind by God in Christ.—And we lay it down at once, boldly and confidently, that nothing else can act in this way, that nothing else can frustrate the intention of God's own sacrament, except either, on the part of God, a positive decree against any person or persons that they shall be shut out from the advantages of redeeming love, or else, on the part of the baptized person himself, either the presence of sin unrepented of, or a refusal of the mind to acknowledge the power of God to work on the heart by his Holy Spirit, and through the appointed means. But as we cannot suppose the existence of the former in connexion with a merciful religion, by which to *all* is given an escape from the hereditary curse, to *all* an opportunity of working out their final salvation, therefore nothing remains for us but to suppose the presence of one or both of the latter to account for the possible inefficacy of the rite.

If this be a correct view of the case, it is

evident that where baptism is administered to adults, it is possible that the rite may be no sacrament, and the church may, through a defect of discipline, be in fault, by admitting persons to baptism whose lives make it notorious that their sins are unrepented of, and their faith dead; or even by admitting those of whose repentance and faith she has not sufficient evidence. If such persons were admitted by her, she would be wrong in prescribing a giving of thanks, as for a certain and absolute regeneration. But this error has no place in the case of infant baptism, because there can be no moral unfitness where there has been no actual sin; nor can the state of discipline in a church affect that which is an *initiatory* sacrament, administered to one who is acknowledged at the time to be a fit recipient. It is with respect to adults that the question of discipline must be agitated, because where there must have been actual sin, it is the business of the church to ascertain that there is also real penitence. But an infant must be acknowledged, on all hands, to be a fit recipient, whether under a perfect or defective discipline; first, because there is

no absolute decree against him, excluding him from the benefits of Christ's death; secondly, because in his case there is no sin unrepented of, nor any refusal of the mind to recognize the power of God to work in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and through the appointed means.

When an infant then, is baptized, there is nothing to prevent baptism being what the scripture, at the least, proves it is intended to be, and what the church asserts, as administered by her, it is, namely, a sign of regeneration; and a sign, not of that which may or may not be, but of that which is, not of that which is prospective, but of that which is present. We shall, however, find that it is, in fact, *our apostolic custom of infant baptism, joined to the doctrine of perseverance*, which, to some of those who adopt the custom itself, has afforded room for questioning the expressions used by the church, and produced to others the necessity of explaining them away. The argument of those who hold this doctrine will be as follows, *many baptized infants fall away in after life, and are lost, but regenerate persons cannot thus fall away, therefore these*

*infants were not regenerate.** And then, holding this conclusion, and yet not being able from a certain stubborn force there is in truth to separate the idea of regeneration from that of baptism, they have recourse to one or other of the opinions stated at the beginning of this discussion,† and if they are members of the church of England, to the explaining away the words of her baptismal service in the manner there described. The same difficulty, it is plain, and therefore the same necessity of explanation, will not exist to them in the case of an adult, because, determining by his life

* This argument, supposing we allow it to *their* tenets, certainly ought to be *confined* to those who hold the doctrine of perseverance, yet I have, most unaccountably, heard it, though not in so many words, yet, in effect, used by those who profess that that doctrine is as far from them as they are from the antipodes. Such persons will do well to consider that each time they admit a man's subsequent wickedness or final perdition as an argument against his baptismal regeneration, they do nothing more or less than allow, that had he been regenerate he must have *persevered*.

† 1st. That those persons who are regenerate at all, are so in baptism. But of baptized infants, some are so, and some not.

2d. That baptism is not to infants a sign of present regeneration, but only provides for its taking place at some future period, on the fulfilment of certain specified conditions.

and actions, or his own assurances, they may believe him to be at the time of his baptism a vessel of mercy, prepared for the full reception of the divine influence, and therefore absolutely regenerate. If he afterwards fall away, why, he deceived them, and was *not* fit, and *not* regenerate, that is, there was a positive unfitness in the recipient, which will be allowed by all parties to be a sufficient reason for the absence of regeneration.

Without entering here upon the question of its correctness, it is very certain that the doctrine that regenerating grace, once given, is indefectible, and must and will work to final salvation, involves those who hold the custom of infant baptism, and the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, in a mass of very strange inconsistencies. They are, in fact, placed in the following dilemma. Either they must reduce baptism to something little better than an initiatory form, a mere badge or token of a Christian man's profession, which is contrary to their own expressed opinion, drawn, as they profess, from most certain warrants of scripture, or else they strike at the very root of the

moral argument on which the baptism of irresponsible children is founded, making the rite to many of them a mere mockery, a pledge of advantages from which, by the fatal perverseness of their destiny, they are utterly debarred; while they hold to the custom as highly scriptural, and, after all, come to the practical conclusion, that every baptized infant is regenerate, for, if one of them die, no doubt whatever is entertained of his salvation.

Now, if there be any high and holy mystery, connected with the *secret* counsels of the Almighty, by which these inconsistencies are to be reconciled, or the doctrines revealed in scripture, so plainly that he may run that readeth them, so qualified as to meet the opposing sentiments of those who can fathom or understand it, I confess that it is not available to me. To me the argument appears in no better light than this. "*I believe, on the authority of scripture, that baptism is intended to be a sign of regeneration, I believe that infants are the persons intended to be baptized, and give thanks accordingly for the regeneration of those who are submitted to the rite, but with all this, my experi-*

ence tells me that many baptized persons are not regenerate, therefore I am obliged to believe that the promises of God are partial in their application, and, though I use the words of absolute belief, to offer my thanks with feelings of uncertainty and doubt. Oh! miserable experience! oh! wretched resource of a half-formed rationalism! Shall my experience tell me that facts are at variance with the everlasting truths of the divine oracles? Or would it not be more wise, would it not be more safe, to review the grounds upon which my conclusions are formed, and distrust them and their conclusions also, rather than subtract any thing from the revelations of eternal truth? Is it, for instance, quite certain that the gospel speaks of *indefectible grace*, when it speaks of baptismal regeneration? If experience proves any thing, it proves that it does not, and here too its conclusions are more to be relied upon, because they are at least not at variance with the Word of God. Facts do indeed prove incontrovertibly that all baptized infants are not saved, but the scriptures declare that, if proper recipients of the rite, they are regenerate, therefore, in accordance with this,

and to preserve inviolate the integrity of revelation, the only legitimate conclusion that can be drawn from his experience by a member of a church practising infant baptism is, *that regenerate persons are not always saved.*

I am well aware that many an excellent and conscientious member of the church will not embrace this conclusion without a struggle; they will scarcely be persuaded that this is what the church requires them to believe, and will be inclined to suspect some grievous error in the reasoning of that man by whom it is announced. Perhaps, however, a little consideration may prove it not quite so monstrous as it may appear to some well read in the mysteries of grace and skilled in the diagnostics of the new birth.

It will be remembered that whether there may be a crisis in the operations of Grace when it shall become indefectible, is not now the point at issue, the question is, whether the term regeneration is capable of such a meaning as to allow us to affirm absolutely that an infant is regenerate, *without any reference whatever to his future life or*

final salvation. If I could merely shew that it was from independent sources, such as an etymology, or any nominal definition, or the acceptation in which the word is taken by writers other than inspired, it would be but of little advantage, the term to which, on such authorities, I affixed such meaning, might not be scriptural regeneration, and not connected with the rite of baptism. But, on the other hand, if it be scripturally true that baptism, when duly administered, and to a fit recipient, is a sacramental sign of regeneration, and if it be scriptural that infants be baptized, I shall have, ot least, good reason to conclude that it is capable of such a meaning, and that such a one will be found to have itself the sanction of scripture. And this will encourage me to go on to discover what that meaning may be, with a good hope that I shall find enough to satisfy me that I may thank God for the regeneration of an infant, without meeting with an obstacle in any doctrine of revealed truth.

The scriptural doctrine of *regeneration in baptism* has been already established. *Is it*

then right and scriptural that infants be baptized? I believe that it is. First. Because they can have no moral unfitness.—Secondly. Because Christ himself shewed his readiness to admit children to the privileges of the kingdom.—Thirdly. From the intimate connexion baptism has with the rite of circumcision—and lastly, from the practice of the primitive church.

I. If we combine the fact that Christ came into the world to *offer*, but not to *ensure*, his salvation to *all* men, with the direction given by him to his chosen disciples to go forth and baptize *all* nations, the inference can hardly escape us that the rite was intended, not as a means of salvation, but *only to place those who received it in a state in which they might be capable of obtaining it.* And this was necessary because men do, by nature, labour under personal disabilities, the weight of an hereditary curse, and till that be removed no offered mercies can avail them. But it is highly desirable, and entirely in accordance with a scheme of mercy, that these disabilities should be removed at the very commencement of exist-

ence, so that the race of salvation may be coeval with the race of life; and as *all* that are born *may* live, we cannot conceive a reason why any one should be excluded from the relieving ordinance who has not, upon and in addition to his hereditary curse, superinduced a positive unfitness of his own.

II. Again, the manner in which Jesus Christ received the little children, as related in the gospels, "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them," is sufficient evidence that he deemed them meet candidates for the benefits of his salvation. Those whom Christ had blessed could no longer be accursed, they could be no longer aliens from God. God had blessed them. He had spoken kindly to them as to beings whom he loved, and would not surely refuse them admittance into the dispensation of his grace. How then can we suppose that the rite which was to set wide the door opening upon the path of life, and throw off the burthen of original guilt, so that there might be no let or hindrance to walking therein, can be refused to such as these? These whom God hath blessed

shall we reject, or suppose that they are not fit objects of the regenerating influences of his Holy Spirit?

III. Again, the baptism of Christians differs in nature and effects from the circumcision of the Jews, only just so far as we might naturally conclude the seal of a covenant of grace would do from the seal of a covenant of works. For, first, the ordinance of circumcision, when renewed in the institutions of Moses, became a seal of separation from those who knew not God, and of enrolment among those whom he had selected to be his people, to whom his word and truth were made known, and the way of life pointed out; secondly, following upon this, and as a necessary consequence, it included in it so solemn and indispensable an obligation to observe the whole law, that circumcision did not profit those who transgressed;* and lastly, it was an external sign of inward purity and holiness; whence those expressions of "circumcising the foreskin of the heart," the "circumcision of the heart," the "circumcision made without hands," so often occur-

* Rom. ii. 25.

ring in the scriptures.* Now, in all these points it finds a parallel in baptism; and a careful comparison of the intention and meaning of the two rites, joined to the fact that circumcision is, under the christian dispensation, no longer required, leaves it beyond a doubt that "what circumcision was of old, baptism is now."† This then leads us to the point we are anxious to ascertain. Under the Jewish dispensation parents were not only allowed, they were *enjoined* to bring their children to be circumcised the eighth day from their birth, it was the will of God that they should at the earliest possible period be written down heirs of salvation, and grow up from their very childhood in hope and expectation of those high destinies which were thus placed at their command. If we apply these facts connected with circumcision to the sacrament of baptism, it would be too much to say that they bound christian parents under the absolute obligation of an express law of God to bring their children to be baptized

* Horne's Introduction to the critical study of the Scriptures, vol. iii. part 3, cap. 2.

† Hooker.

when infants, for if they did they would also bind them to bring them on the eighth day, and a process of such reasoning might reduce our christian liberty with regard to this, and indeed every other, rite under the same servitude as under the ceremonial law; but, when we consider that the end of the two institutions is the same, we do not infer too much when we conclude that they are, at least, *allowed* to enrol their children as parties to the christian covenant as soon as ever it is in their power to do it. And if this be granted, the *obligation* will soon follow. Grant that we are *permitted* by a gracious God to snatch those who are dear to us from the circling power of a pervading curse, to lead them forth from the groans and weepings of the outer darkness, and surely every law of natural affection, surely every motive which can be suggested by the relation which exists between the christian and his God, will lay him under an insurmountable obligation to use the allowed means to add to the number of those for whom Christ died.

If circumcision and baptism are connected in the way we have supposed, this

conclusion cannot be evaded; but as it has been intimated that a distinction does exist between the two rites, it will be better to state, before we conclude this part of our subject, what this distinction really is, that thus all doubt may be removed as to the correctness of our inferences from one to the other. The distinction then is merely this, baptism is a sign of admission into a better covenant than circumcision, and therefore, accompanied by higher advantages. Circumcision admitted into covenant with God, but it was into a covenant of works. Baptism admits into a covenant of grace. Both bring with them an obligation of obedience, the one by the terms of the covenant itself, the other by the relation it establishes between man and God; but the first exacts obedience, the second causes it, by laying open the heart to the operations of a sanctifying and purifying Spirit; and besides unlocks a treasure-house of righteousness, on which faith may securely rest for final acceptance with God. And shall then its increased mercies be a bar to any one's entering thereinto? Shall it embrace fewer within its gracious pale, because it im-

parts more grace? Or shall we suppose that there is that in an infant's heart which must make it dead to the operations of the Spirit of God? Surely, by such reasoning we shall be proving mercy less merciful, and under Christ, excluding those from God and his salvation, who under the law might have been brought nigh unto him.

IV. With respect to the practice of the Primitive Church, we have sufficient evidence, from authority, that very soon after the time of the apostles it was customary, and considered scriptural, for the children of christian parents to be baptized in infancy; afterwards the rite became clogged with a mass of superstitions which rendered the time of its celebration uncertain, and partly dependent on caprice; but yet, though it was sometimes deferred because there was a supposed advantage attached to the delay,* still the fact that infants were

* In the fourth century, "the discretion of parents often suspended the baptism of their children, till they could understand the obligations which they contracted." Besides, "the sacrament of baptism was supposed to contain a full and absolute expiation of sin, and the soul was instantly restored to its original purity, and entitled to the promise of eternal salvation, so that among the proselytes to christianity there were many who judged it imprudent to precipitate a salutary rite which

admissible was not at all doubted. Now, it will not be easy to deny that a doctrine uniformly embraced from the earliest times must have been received from the apostles themselves, especially as scripture, though it lays down no express rule either one way or the other, evidently gives us reason to suppose that under their ministration, children were baptized along with others of a converted household. The passages generally cited in confirmation of this, are Acts xvi. 15; Acts xvi. 33; 1 Cor. i. 16, in which the several households of Lydia, the gaoler of Philippi, and of Stephanas are mentioned as having been baptized, all of each of them, without exception. It may be objected to this, that it is possible there were no infants among them; but this, though possible, is highly improbable, nor is it likely that an inspired historian like St. Luke should, from want of more explicitness of narrative, and more circumstantial detail, have suffered an erroneous example

could not be repeated; to throw away an inestimable privilege, which could never be recovered."—Gibbon's Decline and Fall, who cites in confirmation Martenne, de Ritibus Ecclesiæ Antiquis, and Bingham, in the tenth and eleventh books of his Christian Antiquities.

to go down to posterity to influence the church throughout all ages. The probability is that Jews, who had been accustomed to see children, under the law, admitted into covenant with God from almost the commencement of their existence, would naturally suppose, unless they received instruction to the contrary, which they never did, that the same privilege would be extended to them under the Christian dispensation, and deem this a matter of such obvious inference as to make it unnecessary to leave any express directions on the subject. They spoke of the *baptism* of a household converted to Christianity, as they would have done before of the *circumcision* of one converted to Judaism, meaning that all who were not incapable of it, were submitted to the rite, both young and old, without any distinction of age whatever.

Since, then, baptism is a sign of regeneration to such as are meet recipients of the rite, and since it is reasonable and scriptural that infants be baptized, what remains but to conclude that *baptized infants are certainly regenerate*, and that without suffering any preconceived notions of our own on the

subject of regeneration to interfere with this conclusion. But if any one would answer, "This I should willingly allow, because I assent to both the facts on which the conclusion rests; but when I know that regeneration signifies a change from a carnal to a spiritual nature by the power of the Holy Ghost working in the heart, and also know from my own observation that there are many persons who have been baptized in infancy, in whom no one will pretend that such a change has taken place, how am I to conclude that baptism and regeneration are so inseparably connected as you suppose them to be?" To this I reply, that since such a meaning of the term *regeneration* involves a contradiction in God's revealed word, the proper inference is that it is not the correct one; and then I would ask, "whether the term has not been gratuitously confined to the *triumph* of the Spirit in the heart, when it may with at least equal propriety be applied to *the effect of its primary offices in the scheme of man's salvation*."

Apart from the notion of a Redeemer, man is entirely separated from God, and

that altogether irrespectively of each man's individual character. And why? Because he counts his race from Adam as its Head, and sees descending all through it, from his disobedience, the taint of this hereditary curse; and till this be removed he cannot approach God, or be joined to him, either by his Spirit, or by any other means. Accordingly the first care of Christ, in his character of Redeemer of the world, is to remove this; and this he does in the only way in which it can be done, namely, by transferring man from the natural Head of his race, from whom he inherits banishment and exclusion, which is Adam, to another Head, from whom, unless he exclude himself, he inherits communion and fellowship with God—which is himself, the man Christ Jesus our Lord. According to this view, the man must be *born again* into Christ, before he is capable even of attempting to work out his salvation, or at least, before any attempt can be otherwise than hopeless. This then is what I conceive to be meant by regeneration when it is spoken of as connected with baptism, *man is by that rite transferred to Jesus Christ*

as the Federal Head of his race, and it is effectual to this, because it was appointed by Christ for that very purpose. But if it be objected that still this transfer could not take place without the agency of the Holy Spirit, and therefore we must, as before, look for its future operations in the heart. To this I reply, that certainly it could not, and that I am well aware of the presence of the Spirit in baptism, both from the assurances of scripture, and also because, according to his own promise, it is by his Spirit that Christ now works on those he is willing to call out of darkness to his own marvellous light; but then, instead of looking for manifest fruits of his operations as certainly and necessarily to follow, and from their frequent absence drawing conclusions opposed to revealed doctrine; I would say, that as man cannot be placed in a state to avail himself of the offered salvation without the agency of the Spirit working within him or upon him, and as it is too much to say that all who are placed in that state do partake of the privileges which ought to belong to it, therefore, though Grace have visited a heart, it either does not follow that

it must remain there in spite of carnal efforts to expel it, or else, remaining there, it may meet with such opposition from the carnal affections as entirely to prevent its spiritualizing the corrupt nature, and fitting it for happiness and for God. One of these two positions must follow, and if either be granted, it appears to me that all other difficulties on the subject of Baptismal Regeneration may be easily cleared away.

If I am now asked, "What, then, is the advantage to the regenerate infant of a regeneration which does so little towards securing final salvation?" To this I shall answer, that the advantage is very great, for that he has thus been made capable of appropriating to himself the benefits of Christ's death and passion for the remission of sins, and also of establishing that communion with the Spirit of God which can alone restore him to righteousness and purity, whereas he was previously incapable of both; because, so long as he inherited from Adam, he could inherit nothing but death for disobedience, and perpetual separation and exclusion from God. But now his disabilities are removed, and he is more-

over supplied with aid to help him on in that path to salvation which is now opened before him; and though the office of the Spirit be merely to aid, not to exercise a compulsory power over the will and affections, yet, in tracing the progress of the regenerate infant, we shall find that, if he walk not as he is empowered and called upon to walk, he stands self-destroyed. This progress may be described as follows.

He is, by baptism, made the child of God, and placed under the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. So far all is well, and the baptised person is in a state of grace. But then, with his growth, there grow up within the heart bad passions and evil inclinations:—and the nature of these is such that, by continual indulgence, though not otherwise, they will at length become so powerful as to counteract every effort of divine grace, deface every vestige of purity, and at last spread total corruption and loathsomeness around; while, on the other hand, if they are as continually repressed, they in time lose their power, and the Spirit has scope to mould the heart and its affections in accordance with the will of God. Whe-

ther they shall be repressed or indulged it belongs to the human will to decide, as soon as it is capable of being exercised responsibly. It is evident that consequences of the most vital importance are attached to each act of decision, and accordingly God, who is not willing that any should perish, does, each time the will is so called upon to decide, influence it on the side of virtue by setting before it unbounded prospects of reward, and since the passions and inclinations of evil are too present and too mighty to be resisted and overcome by man's unassisted strength, he also promises the prevailing aid against them of that Spirit whose further office, when they are defeated, is to renew and sanctify the heart. This aid is promised to prayer, and thus it depends on the bias of the will towards present pleasure or future bliss, whether or not it shall be summoned, and consequently whether a spirit of death or a spirit of life shall reign triumphant in the inner man. And every time a temptation occurs the same process is repeated; again the passions call, again the promises of life hereafter are held before the intellectual vision,

and again, the will decides whether the invitations of the passions shall be yielded to, and thus the Spirit quenched or exiled, or whether that Spirit shall be summoned to repel them and thus established with its purifying influences in their place. But in every successive contest there is this difference, either the passions obtain a more ready mastery over the vacillating will, or else the Spirit is more promptly summoned to its aid, and obtains a more decisive victory over a now weakened foe; till, at length, the baptized Christian either becomes a sanctified and established servant of God, by making use of the privileges to which he has been introduced, or else, by spurning and casting them off from him, sinks into the degraded and outcast reprobate.*

This, then, is my view of the doctrine of

* St. Peter, while he asserts the efficacy of baptism, at the same time shews us what is required of the baptized person to make the rite effectual to his salvation. We are, he tells us, *saved by baptism*, and then immediately adds, "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." As no one could advocate more strongly the complete efficacy of the rite, so no one could depict more graphically what was required of the future life of a baptized person. See 1 Peter iii. 21.

baptismal regeneration. It is the being brought out from that state of hopeless exclusion from God in which we are born; the being again brought nigh unto him, and so made capable of working out salvation, with the promise of his aid to assist us in the work. It is, in fact, the commencement of our spiritual life. This life ought to be, and always may be, progressive till it reach the highest excellence it is capable of attaining on earth, preparatory to its perfection in heaven.* Still, however, it does not follow that it must be so, because if the spirit be "grieved," "done despite to," and "quenched," it will, at length, cease its

* The words of Dr. Gloucester Ridley on the subject of baptismal regeneration and the progressive renewing of the spirit are so beautiful, and so entirely in accordance with my own sentiments, that I cannot forbear quoting them.—"That wonderful change in all our faculties which is effected by the Spirit of holiness as it were annihilating our former selves, and making other creatures of us than we were before, is, at its commencement, called 'regeneration.' Not that this change is at once, or at all, perfected in this world, so that none of the dregs of our old nature and original corruption remain; our Christian course is only a 'going on unto perfection,' and not the arrival at it; it is the abounding more and more (1 Thess. iv. 1), and not a full attainment. So that regeneration, if it be applied to the whole and entire change of a man, is a progressive state, the perfection of which is in

influences on the heart, and he who once lived is again left to the sad dominion of corruption and death.

If any difficulties remain on the score of "perseverance" I shall now endeavour to clear them away. In the first place, to suppose that grace is *indefectible at the commencement of its operations on the heart* involves a palpable absurdity. For, if it be, then every baptized person who is, by the Spirit, regenerate, (and that *many* are so is very generally allowed) is at once divested of all responsibility. But if it be not at the commencement, in what stage of its progress, short of its absolute sovereignty, shall we dare to pronounce that it is so? And if this argument be objected to, as built upon

another world, the commencement and degrees in this. The *commencement* of it, when, instead of children of wrath we are received into God's favour, and have the Spirit given us as a principle of new life, *gradually to unfold itself hereafter, as we shall nourish and comply with it*, is usually called more particularly our regeneration, as it is our being born of the Spirit, and is the first beginning of a new and spiritual life. Both in the scriptures (except one text, Matt. xix. 28, may bear a doubt) and in the writings of the Fathers, as far as I have been able to observe, regeneration means our being born again into God's family, and receiving, in the graces of the Holy Ghost, a principle of new life, which is at baptism."

our own premises, though indeed those premises are themselves established on most certain authority of scripture, then I will endeavour, in the second place, to bring forward proofs from the scriptures themselves, that they do not warrant the notion that grace may not, at least in its primary effects, and during its progress, be effectually and finally resisted. If they do, we may well ask, what does St. Paul mean when he tells us, in his epistle to the Hebrews, that "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."* I have not brought forward this passage in order to discuss to what particular point the dominion of grace in the heart must have advanced in order to render an apostasy from it irrecoverable, nor yet, whether or not there may be a point of perfection, beyond that mentioned by the apostle, in which such an apostasy is impossible, but only to prove that there are states of grace, whether in their infancy or

* Heb. vi. 4, 6.

in advance it matters not now, from which a man may fall away; and this the passage cited certainly does prove; for whatever the apostle's argument may be, it entirely rests on the supposition that a falling away is possible, that after grace has found its way into a heart it may be resisted, its righteous yoke cast off, and all its glorious privileges renounced and utterly abolished. And again, if this be not possible, what is the signification of such expressions as "Doing despite unto the Spirit of grace,"* "Quenching the Spirit,"† "Grieving the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed,"‡ "Receiving the grace of God in vain,"§ against all which the converts, the baptised and allowedly regenerate converts of the first ages of Christianity, are frequently and affectionately warned.‖ Surely there is nothing in scripture to warrant the supposition that regenerate persons, persons

* Heb. x. 29. † 1 Thess. v. 19. ‡ Eph. iv. 30.
§ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

‖ I know that there are various ways of explaining these texts, but even could they be all proved powerless for *my* purpose, which they never can be to those who are in the habit of admiring the *integrity* and *simplicity* of God's word, still I

regenerate as they are in baptism; from whom, by the mighty working of the Spirit, "the pure and consecrating element hath cleansed the original stain, received into the second ark, Christ's church," may not fall back again, and forfeit the privilege bestowed; or that the hope expressed that they, having been so cleansed and therein received, and, by the power of God's grace, "from wrath redeemed, shall float over the billows of this troublesome world to the fair land of everlasting life," needs to be any thing more than hope; and if not, what need is there that the unwelcome fact, that depravity and sin prevail and conquer, even among the baptized, should make us hesitate to conclude in the same way as, apart from that, scripture would cause us to conclude, and reduce us to the necessity of, at least, qualifying the expressions used by the church in her baptismal service?

If the term regeneration, as connected with baptism, mean what I have supposed

would rest triumphantly on the passage from Hebrews vi., as one which no sophism can get rid of, or invalidate.

it to mean, I cannot imagine that any difficulty need remain. It must be remembered that the doctrine of *perseverance after that grace has obtained a certain sovereignty over the affections*, supposing such a doctrine to be admissible, is entirely unconnected with the question, because baptism does not place the soul in the state of subjection to the Spirit, but only in the way of advancement to that state. To which state the word "regeneration" is most properly applied becomes merely a controversy of terms, but there is nothing in the meaning of the word to prevent its application in the way we have contended for; it is so applied by scripture, and a person in that state is certainly in a state of salvation till the commission of actual sin, which he as certainly is not by nature, and this alone is sufficient to make us conclude that he is *therefore* regenerate.

One objection, however, to the view of the subject here taken still remains to be discussed. It was stated in the second of the two opinions cited at the beginning of these remarks, "that baptism is the sign of a covenant made by God with man. That

a covenant implies the fulfilment of certain conditions, and as it is out of the power of an infant to fulfil any, he cannot, so long as his inability remains, be put in possession of the stipulated privileges." To this I answer generally, *that if persons confessedly inadequate to the fulfilment of any conditions are admitted by God, as we suppose them to be, as parties to a covenant with him, then it follows that he who admitted them will not suffer their inability to exclude them from the promised benefits.* But though this be undoubtedly true, and in accordance with God's merciful dispensation; even supposing the grounds on which the objection rests, namely, that baptism is the sign of a covenant, to be correct, since, however, the objection is itself a specious one, it may be as well, in order to understand the case in all its bearings, to examine it a little more closely.

It is assumed that baptism is *a sign of a covenant.* Now, if this be a covenant with God as God, it must be a *covenant of works,* because we cannot conceive God as the Ruler of the Universe looking with favour on any thing less than perfect obedience, and in this case the fulfilment of the conditions

is impossible alike to the infant and the man. Again, if it be with God in Christ willing to accept a vicarious righteousness, then this may be so extended as to comprehend alike the infant and the man. So that in both cases they stand alike: in the first, if one be excluded the other must be excluded also; in the second, if one be accepted then there is no bar to the acceptance of the other. In fact, however, this is not a sufficiently comprehensive view of the subject, and the ground itself on which the objection rests is such as cannot be maintained. Baptism *is not only a sign of a covenant*, but is itself *a condition of one*, by submitting to which those who are parties to it become entitled to the privileges thereunto belonging. It is a *sign of a covenant* made by God with us through Christ as a Mediator, the *condition of one* made *immediately* with us by Christ himself.—Christ having purchased the restoration and salvation of mankind on condition that through him they appeased the demands of Divine Justice, and having, in the form and nature of man, fulfilled the contract for himself and them by his meritorious obedience unto

death; baptism becomes a sign of a covenant entered into with God and completed on the part of man, by Christ. So that baptism is not merely the sign of a covenant made between God and man, but, *as it regards man as united with Christ*, is *the sign of one, the conditions of which are already vicariously fulfilled*, and to the benefits of which he is therefore entitled, till he forfeit them by a renewed apostasy on his part. And this leads us to the point at issue. It may be asked, "How is it that it can so regard him? Does not this very union with Christ, necessary in those who are parties to the baptismal covenant, depend on the performance of conditions on the part of man?" It does; but then, submission to the rite of baptism is the very condition required by Christ to be complied with, in order that this union may be effected. We are led on from the covenant made by God with man, the terms of which we are allowed to comply with vicariously in the person of Christ, to another offered to us by Christ himself, the condition of which is—that we be baptized; the stipulated privilege—a "Baptism into Christ," that

union with him by which we satisfy the demands of God, and are made heirs of eternal salvation.

It is true that Christ's words are not simply, those that are baptized shall be saved, but "those that believe and are baptized;" and this may lead to a notion that if baptism *be* a condition of regeneration, it has, at least, another coupled with it, which is Faith. Granted, Faith *is* a condition,—but of what? not of regeneration, but of a fitness for that which is a sign of regeneration. "Those who believe and are baptized shall be saved," says Christ. Those who by Faith are fitted to receive that rite of baptism which I have appointed, shall find therein regeneration and salvation; "but those who believe not shall be damned,"—and why?—because through their unbelief they are absolutely unfit and unable to make use of those means of grace which, if they could use them, would save them from the dreadful alternative. And then, of whom is it that this condition of fitness is required? Of those only who are capable of a positive act of unbelief; and that, because with them Faith is the only prin-

ciple which can prevent that positive unfitness which consists in a continuance in sin, and a rejection of the promises of God. With these it is both reasonable and necessary that such a condition should be required, but it is not so with infants who cannot so sin, and in whom no moral unfitness can possibly exist. To infants, if indeed they are, as we suppose them to be, in other respects proper recipients of the rite, baptism is, equally as to the most faithful Christian, a means of grace and a sign of regeneration, though no other condition be performed by them or for them beyond a mere submission to the rite.

But though, where there is no commission of actual sin, Christ exacts no condition but that of submission to the rite of baptism to ensure the privileges of the gospel; yet, we must not suppose that this is the case throughout. That is, though in the first instance, the baptism of infants be a sufficient means for their regeneration; yet, it is not sufficient to ensure the continuance of its privileges. Actual sin and the power of fulfilling conditions, grow up together. Actual sin produces an unfitness

both for regeneration in the first place, and the growth of its effects afterwards, which can only be done away by Repentance and Faith, therefore these are conditions required, both of those who have committed sin before baptism that they may be baptized, and also of those who have committed it afterwards that they may enjoy the benefits of baptism, that is, of every one who lives to become a responsible being.

This consideration will, I trust, prevent any abuse of the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. Let no one suppose that his regeneration by the Spirit in his infancy through the baptismal rite relieves him in the slightest degree from the obligation either to true and real repentance for sin, or to faith in Christ, both as an atoning sacrifice and the continual dispenser of a renewing Spirit to cleanse and sanctify his heart. Let us remember to whom we are regenerate; that it is to a pure and holy being, under whose banner we are enlisted, and to whom as to our Head our utmost obedience is due, to whom indeed we are by our New Birth united, to walk as he walked, and

obey as he obeyed. Thus holding fast th profession of our Faith, and looking Christ, as to him by whom and throu whom we become sons of God, we shall on from strength to strength, till that d when, freed from the corruptions of t flesh, we shall be invested with the full a glorious privileges of our birth, an eter and indissoluble union with his Father a our Father, in the heaven of heavens, t mansions of God himself.

THE END.

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